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**A SOUTH AFRICAN INVESTIGATION INTO THE MEANING  
OF WORK WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF CARING FOR  
CHILDREN WITH HIV/AIDS.**

**C. W. Young**

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## **Declaration**

I have identified all work by others in this thesis, consulting original references unless stated. All other work presented in this thesis is my own work.

C. W. Young

## Abstract

This exploratory study into the meaning of work (MOW), within a new and therefore under-researched context, was conducted in a hospice for children with HIV/AIDS. Its need arose because when the context of work changes, meanings that have been taken for granted become obsolete. Data was collected using semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Qualitative data analysis methods were used, drawing on Miles and Huberman's (1994) and Bogdan and Biklen's (1992) analytical frameworks. Three main themes emerged. First, the contextual factors affecting the experience of work, such as the individual's context and the context of broader society. Second, the impact of religious beliefs on the work experience, of which the focal point was the impact of viewing work as a calling. Third, the factors other than religious beliefs, that influence the way work is defined, such as money, enjoyment and time. It emerged that participants experienced a broad range of intrinsic rewards, thus contradicting views that economic rewards are the sole reason for engaging in work. Contrary to the traditional perspective in the MOW literature, which views religion as having little or no impact on the way people view work, the findings of this study illustrate the significant impact of religious beliefs on the experience and meaning of work. The study illustrates the value, for a variety of stakeholders, of understanding what makes work meaningful. Understanding the impact of HIV/AIDS on the MOW is a new facet of organisational psychology requiring further investigation.

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## **Chapter One**

### **A New Context for the Meaning of Work**

The work and environmental context of interest in this research arises from the spread and impact of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and the Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). The spread and impact of HIV/AIDS in South Africa creates a new context in which people need to live and work.

While there are many organisational studies that have been conducted as a result of the emergence of this disease, these have focused on the economic and financial impact of the disease on organisations and the impact that HIV/AIDS will have on workforce numbers. There has not been sufficient research into the impact that HIV/AIDS will have on the MOW. It is essential to study the MOW within this new context because as Guevara and Ord (1996) suggest, when the context of work changes, meanings that have been taken for granted will become obsolete. Organisation's whose work centres around people with HIV/AIDS (PWA) need to consider the impact that working with this disease has on employees.

While some of the people caring for PWA may be thrown into the position unwillingly, for example when family members are ill and there is no other available care, a large number of people are willingly choosing to care for people who they know are likely to die. Although there are now some life-enhancing and –prolonging drugs available, these are not widely available and there is still no cure for the disease. Although a number of factors influence the MOW, as previously mentioned, working with terminal patients with a disease such as HIV/AIDS (being the disease that it is, the nature, the way it has manifested in SA, the related issues etc) is likely to influence the meaning that work holds for the people involved. This study is an exploratory study on the MOW for people working with PWA.

Understanding what makes work meaningful is valuable for a variety of interest groups, including individuals, organisations and employers, and organisational psychologists. Simply, by understanding what makes work meaningful, individuals will be prepared against possible health implications of engaging in non-meaningful work (Fox, 1994). They will also know where to seek meaningful work and why, and will be in a better position to approach the organisation for the aspects that provide them with meaning. Understanding the MOW will improve the efforts of corporate and public administrators when approaching changing labour forces (Harpaz, Honig & Coetsier, 2002). By considering work meanings, organisations and employers will be able to better understand and manage organisational processes (Ruiz Quintanilla, 1991). Through examining the MOW, organisational psychologists will have a fundamental basis upon which to explore and understand many phenomena within the field of organisational psychology (Brief, 1991). As this research falls within the ambit of organisational psychology, the importance of understanding the MOW for organisational psychology warrants further consideration.

### ***Organisational Psychology: The Importance of Understanding the MOW***

The meaning of work (MOW) is a fascinating area for organisational psychologists because it is significant for how people work and the manner in which they work. It is also a diverse and complex topic – diverse because it is related to a number of other life areas, such as family or leisure habits, and complex because the diversity of influences on the MOW make it unique for every individual. It might be said that it is not the organisation's responsibility to provide work that is meaningful for employees. In part this may be true. However, considering previous research on the MOW and research on various occupational groups, the idea emerges that there are common characteristics that make work meaningful for individuals working in certain environments, occupations, and organisations. This knowledge would be both interesting and useful for organisations and organisational psychologists.

Past research clearly shows that work is significant to people - it generates economic and sociopsychological benefits, and consumes a large amount of time (England & Whitely, 1990; MOW-IRT, 1981). Some research has shown that work is considered



more important than community, leisure and religion, and second only to family (MOW-IRT, 1987; Harding & Hikspoors, 1995 & Harpaz, 1999, both cited in Snir & Harpaz, 2002). In fact, Kanungo (1991, p. 161) notes that “Work is so closely interwoven with human existence that it would be hard...to ignore the meaning and significance of work both at the individual and at the societal level”. Yet despite this significance, Brief (1991) states that organisational psychologists pay too little attention to the MOW in people’s lives.

Sully (1993) argues that understanding the relationship between people and their work and the meanings that they attach to their work is not an arbitrary academic concern but is important for any process aimed at development. Therefore, if organisations, societies and people are to develop, work meanings need to be understood. More strongly put, according to the MOW-International Research Team (MOW-IRT) (1981, p. 567), “it can be stated without exaggeration that the ‘meaning of working’ forms one of the most relevant issues in the further development of the socio-economic structures of countries in the post-industrial era”. They propose that studying work meanings (their antecedents and consequences) is essential for an understanding of work as an important life role (MOW-IRT, 1981).

England and Harpaz (1990) state that research into how different occupational groups, such as different ages or vocations, define work, should mean that organisational decision-makers could more effectively manage their human resources. For example, they note that definitions linking work to pay or income have immediate implications for organisational decision-makers and that redesigning jobs in order to incorporate aspects favoured by employees may result in higher motivation (England & Harpaz, 1990). Similarly, England and Whitley (1990) comment about the implication of work meanings on the design of work and reward systems. They suggest that for people with high economic values and low expressive values, an organisation centred around the adequacy of wages may be most appropriate. Simply put, it is important to consider the MOW because the way individuals and groups behave at work is largely determined by the MOW that individuals hold (Kanungo, 1991; Roberson, 1990).

The MOW-IRT (1981) proposes that work meanings develop within individuals, affecting organisations and society. Whether work meanings affect organisations and

society or vice versa, work meanings incorporate individual factors (experience and needs) and a social dimension (social norms and socialisation) (Ruiz Quintanilla, 1991). It is likely that to a certain degree, work values will reflect societal values and work organisations need to adjust to changes in the work ethic of employees as reflected in society.

It is interesting to note that the MOW-IRT (1987) made the decision to study the meaning of working, as opposed to the meaning of work, because this signalled that they were more concerned with psychological meaning, with regards to the significance, definitions, beliefs and values which individuals and groups attach to working, as opposed to the philosophical significance of work. Although this study uses the terms work and working interchangeably, the focus is on the psychological meaning of work as described by the MOW-IRT. The reason for the interchangeable use of terms, is to provide a wide and encompassing view of work and working, and because other writers have often not specified whether they are discussing the meaning of work or the meaning of working.

Although motivation is going to play a part in what makes work meaningful, meaning may be a precursor for motivation. When an individual is aware of what brings them meaning in their work, they are more likely to be motivated to seek this meaning and thus do the work. Therefore, while what motivates a person to do a certain type of work gives clues for what gives meaning to that person's work, this research has not used as its basis the theories and literature on motivation.

Nosow and Form (1962) note that historically, the majority of people have not been concerned with the MOW, but that this is not true for people in modern industrial societies where the expectation to derive meaning from work is one of the most distinguishing features of contemporary urban societies. Terez (1999) comments that there is a desperate eagerness to talk about meaning in the workplace and England and Whitely (1990) propose that there is now an increased urgency to study working, due to a number of factors that are changing workplace practices, such as workforce composition and increased international competition. While these factors are impacting South African organisations, HIV/AIDS is also having a dramatic effect on

South African organisations and the workforce. This effect is largely due to the prevalence of this disease.

### ***The HIV/AIDS Situation***

In the year 2003, there were 4.8 million (range 4.2-6.3 million) new infections of HIV, bringing total worldwide infections to 37.8 million (range 34.6-42.3 million), and 2.9 million (range 2.6-3.3 million) people died from AIDS.

Africa has experienced one of the fastest growing pandemics (Whiteside & Sunter, 2000) and the World Bank (1999, as cited in Whiteside & Sunter, 2000) has estimated that in Africa, deaths due to HIV/AIDS will soon surpass the 20 million Europeans who died of the plague during 1347-1351. While Sub-Saharan Africa is home to only 10% of the world's population, almost two-thirds (approximately 25 million, range 23.1-27.9 million) of all the PWHAs live in this region (UNAIDS, 2004). Of the 10 million youths (ages 15-24 years) who have HIV/AIDS, 62% live in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNAIDS, 2004).

By the end of 2002, 5.3 million South Africans were infected with HIV/AIDS (Benetar, 2004; UNAIDS 2002, as cited in Gennrich, 2004). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (2003, as cited in Kalichman & Simabiyi, 2003), 250 000 South Africans die every year because of AIDS and 1600 are infected with HIV every day. According to Benetar (2004), the number of South Africans infected with HIV/AIDS accounts for 10% of the country's population, and it is estimated that 40-50% of the country's workforce will die from AIDS in the next ten years (LoveLife, 2000).

### ***HIV/AIDS Prevalence in Children***

In Sub-Saharan Africa, one third of new annual infections is represented by children under the age of 18 (Amon, 2002). Since the identification of HIV, AIDS has claimed the lives of over 3 million children (UNAIDS, 2000, as cited in Amon, 2002). The World Health Organization (2000, as cited in Magnus, Schmidt, Brown & Kissinger, 2002) estimated that in the year 2000, 500 000 HIV-infected children died and 600

000 children became infected with HIV. Three years later, 2.1 million (range 1.9-2.5 million) children under the age of 15 were living with HIV; 490 000 (range 440 000-580 000) died; and 630 000 (range 570 000-740 000) become infected with the disease, at an approximate rate of 1700 per day (UNAIDS, 2004).

In South Africa, in the year 1999, 13% of those with HIV/AIDS were babies infected through their mothers (UNAIDS, 1999, as cited in Gennrich, 2004). According to UNICEF (2004b), by the end of 2001, there were 250 000 South African children under the age of 15 living with HIV/AIDS.

It is estimated that in South Africa, 8000 babies are born to HIV-infected mothers every month (UNAIDS 2002, as cited in Gennrich, 2004). Without preventative intervention, 35% of babies born to HIV+ mothers become infected with the disease (UNICEF, 2004a). Therefore while not all babies of HIV-infected women necessarily contract HIV, it is logical that the more women infected, the more babies there are likely to be born with the disease. In South Africa, the prevention of HIV transmission from mother to child has not been handled as effectively as it could have, and therefore not enough preventions are happening (Benetar, 2004; Gennrich, 2004). Under current conditions, most South African HIV-infected children will not live past six years old, although there are rare exceptions (Loening-Voysey & Wilson, 2001, as cited in Loening-Voysey, 2002). According to Coovadia (2003, as cited in Gennrich, 2004), half of the children being admitted to King Edward VIII hospital in Durban, Kwa-Zulu Natal (one of South Africa's largest hospitals) are HIV positive or have already developed AIDS.

Financial and medical approaches to the disease may be improving quality of life and reducing the spread of the disease in some areas, but UNAIDS (2004) notes that these improvements are not nearly sufficient for halting or reversing the epidemic. If things do not change significantly between now and 2010, it is estimated that 50% of South African children now 15 years old, will not live beyond the age of 25 (LoveLife & Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, 2002, as cited in Gennrich, 2004).

While it is important to bear in mind that it is difficult to determine exact prevalence rates for any disease and therefore most figures are estimates based on the data

available (UNAIDS, 2004), these figures clearly communicate the HIV/AIDS situation worldwide and in South Africa and the context in which South Africans are living and working. The choice of this context, as that in which this research was conducted, requires explanation.

### ***Choosing a Specific Research Context***

Caring for HIV/AIDS-infected children is complex (Boland, 2000 & Lindegren et al., 2000, both cited in Magnus et al., 2002) as their needs extend beyond normal paediatric care. Care for HIV-infected children requires specialized child- and HIV-care; informed management of HIV symptoms, diagnoses and medication; psychosocial support; and neurodevelopmental assessment and intervention (Magnus et al.). In South Africa, where health care costs and the lack of government funded health care resources are exacerbated by the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, there is an increased need for communities to bear the burden of health care.

Stein (2004) states that in many cases, community-based HIV/AIDS hospice care may be more appropriate and less expensive than hospital care. Also, Magnus et al., (2002) cite a number of sources that have identified the importance of ancillary services in the care of HIV-infected children. They note that in many cases, ancillary care may be the only form of care available to HIV-infected children, as many lack access to specialized medical care (Magnus et al.). Not only do ancillary services often improve access to primary care, but even without antiretroviral medication, the treatment of opportunistic infections and improvement in care and supportive care create the potential for improved health (Magnus et al.).

The severity of the situation regarding children and HIV/AIDS is clear from the previous section, and it is also evident that community-based HIV/AIDS care is a trend that has emerged due to the prevalence of HIV/AIDS and is a new work context that warrants examination. For these reasons, this research was conducted in a community-based HIV/AIDS organisation for children.

### *About the Organisation chosen*

The organisation in this study is a hospice for HIV/AIDS infected children, up to the age of 12 years. The intention is to care for children for whom it has been determined that medical treatment is no longer effective and who have a life expectancy of about 60 days. Over the last three years, the organisation has cared for 83 children, of which 37 have died whilst in their care. However, despite the anticipated life expectancy of 60 days, some patients have lived for much longer in their care - one child has been in their care for over a year – and some have even been able to return home.

The organisation's mission is to bring hope to HIV/AIDS infected children and their families, through compassionate, palliative medical care. Part of their objective is to change attitudes about HIV/AIDS and to reduce the spread of the disease, through providing love and education to those in need.

This organisation is a facility where children can be closely monitored and their medication can be effectively managed. The aim is to create an environment that encourages dignity and morale, and to this end, family participation is encouraged. Involving the family also includes educating and counselling, in order that families may care for their children at home, if possible.

While the organisation does not restrict the involvement of, or service to, people from other religious backgrounds, it is a Christian organisation and it upholds Christian ethics and values. Part of the service the organisation provides includes spiritual and emotional support, with regards to coping with the impact of HIV/AIDS, preparing for the death of a loved one, and grieving processes. While earlier research and literature on work and working take account of the role of religion and religious beliefs, such as that which is concerned with the Protestant Work Ethic, more contemporary research and literature on the MOW has largely ignored or overlooked this factor (Davidson & Caddell, 1994). Therefore, in addition to the HIV/AIDS-related context of this organisation, the importance of religion in the functioning of this organisation made it an interesting context in which to conduct research on the MOW.

Although the organisation is now initiating a home-based care programme, this type of care was not developed enough when the organisation was established for this to be a viable option and it was identified that some type of care that fell between hospital and home care was needed. In addition, a need was identified for hospices that were specifically devoted to caring for children with HIV/AIDS. The organisation was established in order to address these needs. By taking care of children for whom hospital-based medical care is no longer effective or reasonable, this organisation helps to alleviate the burden on hospital staff and also helps to make room for other patients in what are generally overcrowded hospitals.

### ***Defining the Study***

This research is an exploratory study into the MOW for the people within a new organisation, responding to a new set of circumstances. The context within which they are working can be anticipated as becoming more common in future years, and therefore represents an interest and concern for organisational psychologists.

Essentially, this research sets out to explore whether the key aspects of a new organisational challenge (the impact of HIV/AIDS on the MOW amongst employees working in a caring organisation) can be understood on the basis of existing information.

The objective is threefold. First, to identify key characteristics that affect the MOW for people caring for children with HIV/AIDS, through exploring the meaning that these child-care workers attach to their work. Secondly, to highlight the importance of understanding the MOW and how an improved understanding can benefit a range of stakeholders. Thirdly, to establish a basis for future research in this area, especially that of a qualitative nature.

### ***Structure of this Dissertation***

Schutt (2004) notes that the aim of research is not just to discover something, but to communicate the discoveries to a larger audience. The purpose of this report is to communicate these discoveries.

The broad scope of previous work on the MOW requires an extensive literature review to identify whether the existing information is sufficient to explain the MOW in this new context. Chapter Two presents previous research on the MOW and Chapter Three looks at the MOW within health-related caring professions. Both areas of literature are relevant for creating a basis on which to conduct a study on the MOW in the chosen context. Chapter Four examines literature relating to how the MOW can be studied and determined, and Chapter Five details the actual research processes and methods used in this study. The results of this study are presented in two chapters, with Chapter Six containing an examination and discussion of the contextual factors affecting the experience of work, while the results and discussion pertaining to defining work in a new context is presented in Chapter Seven. Chapter Eight deals with some of the implications of the results of this study, and Chapter Nine concludes this research.

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## Chapter Two

### Research and Literature on the MOW

The rationale for studying the MOW has already been presented in Chapter 1, so this literature review begins by examining the literature about work through the ages, in order to provide a basis for the ensuing examination of more modern ideas about, and definitions of, work. In addition, this review examines the relationship between work and money, and work and non-work domains; and it considers some of the contextual factors that can affect the MOW.

As Sully (1993) notes, many authors have dealt with the topic of people and work but few have concentrated specifically on the MOW. This may be due to the fact that the MOW is an extremely complex and broad area which could be approached from a number of viewpoints. In order to address this broadness and complexity, material for this review has been drawn from a number of sources, including books, journals, electronic journals, and internet sites. Information on the MOW was collected and researched, following which sources cited or topics referred to in this literature, were sought and researched.

One of the ways which Nosow and Form (1962) propose for studying the MOW is an historical analysis, tracing historical changes in the meanings of work. Examining historical perspectives of work and working is valuable for a number of reasons: Taylor (1968) notes that work has had many meanings through time; Neff (1985) observes that despite the lack of detailed evidence on how people worked and how they felt about their work, through the ages, there is enough information to make the inference that work has been interpreted in different ways during different times and by different societies; and similarly, Brief and Nord (1900b) state that the MOW is historically relative. In addition, the MOW-IRT (1981) suggest that one of the ways to

know what the world of work will look like in the future is to examine the present MOW. In the same vein then, understanding the MOW today may be aided by examining what work meant in the past. The next section does not critique the merit or historical accuracy of the development of historical perspectives on work, but aims to provide a broad understanding of how concepts and understandings of work (and thus the MOW) have evolved through history.

### ***Historical Perspectives of Work***

In some Homeric societies (societies that existed during the time of Homer, a Greek writer who lived between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries BC) , nobles and aristocrats worked with their hands and work was esteemed, while others held an aristocratic disdain for engaging in work, and abstained from work in order to live the good life (Applebaum, 1992). Similarly, for some ancient Greeks and Romans, manual work was a curse – a waste of time that could otherwise have been spent in the pursuit of truth and virtue, and thus work needed to be separated from the good life (Ciulla, 2000; Nord, Brief, Atieh & Doherty, 1990; Tilgher, 1931, 1962). With work being perceived as ‘a curse from the gods’, it was something best given to those who were already ‘cursed’ and thus this work ideology is dependent on slavery, for if there is to be a separation of work (the curse) and the good life, there needs to be a class of people to which this curse can be assigned (Ciulla, 2000; Nord et al.,1990).

Ancient Hebrew philosophical and theological ideas echoed the sentiments of the Graeco-Roman system, although they saw work as both a form of punishment and a means of atonement (Nord et al., 1990; Tilgher, 1931, 1962). Some Jewish thinkers viewed work as a way of cooperating with God in the salvation of the world, while others condemned material work for taking time away from spiritual life, thinking that those who worked should do so for themselves and others, whereas those who committed their time to spiritual pursuits would have their work done by others (Tilgher, 1931).

Early Christian teachings generally followed the Jewish idea that work is punishment from God for man’s sins, but added a positive slant in that work was a route to goodness through accumulating goods and services to be shared with those in need

(Nord et al., 1990; Tilgher, 1931, 1962). These understandings of work emphasise the outcomes and not the activities themselves, and no separation was recognised between mental and physical work (Nord et al.; Tilgher, 1931). Work held no intrinsic value – it had the potential for spiritual dignity as a means to a worthy end, but it held no inherent value or importance, and thus, work was seen as a morally neutral, natural condition of Christian life (Nord et al.; Tilgher, 1931, 1962).

Applebaum (1992) describes work in the Middle Ages as necessary to ensure the survival of the family and as a tax to the lord of the land or the Church. Although workers were the lowest of the three orders (clergy, warriors/nobles, and workers), workers were valued and respected, especially those engaged in agricultural work. (Applebaum, 1992). However, the market was rudimentary and with no need for surplus production there was no incentive for working harder than the minimum required (Applebaum, 1992).

According to Applebaum (1992), the Protestant attitude towards work represents the beginning of modern ideas of work. Similarly, Tilgher (1931, 1962) notes that the idea of work as the base and key of life is an idea established in the modern mind by the spiritual revolution propelled by Protestantism, in which the first voice to be noted is that of Luther's. For Luther, all who could work should work; work was a calling set by God; and failure to accept the calling was seen as immoral (Nord et al., 1990; Tilgher, 1962). Luther made no distinction between 'religious' and 'worldly' work - the best way to serve God was to do one's work to the best of one's ability, and as long as work was done in the spirit of obedience towards God and for the love of one's neighbour, all varieties of work had equal spiritual dignity (Tilgher, 1931). Thus the moral neutrality of work began to diminish (Nord et al.) as work became seen as a moral obligation (Ciulla, 2000).

Calvin interpreted Luther's ideas and saw work as a token of grace and a means to salvation (Ciulla, 2000). For Calvin, it was a religious duty to select and follow a calling. Unlike Luther, Calvin felt it one's duty to seek out the profession or work that will bring the greatest return to oneself and society, (Applebaum, 1992; Tilgher, 1931). To please God, work was to be methodological and disciplined, not casual and intermittent and all people (even the rich) should work because it is God's will for

humankind to work (Applebaum, 1992; Tilgher, 1931, 1962). People should seek to make themselves wealthy but should not lust after the fruits of their labour – work and wealth was not for individual gain, but in order to reflect the majesty of God and for the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth (Tilgher, 1931). It was these ideas that Tilgher (1931) considers to be the foundation for the cult idea that work is for work's sake, and that both thrift and wealth are to be promoted while rest, pleasure, luxury and ostentation are to be despised (Applebaum, 1992).

While the connection between Protestantism and the capitalist work ethic is clear, Applebaum (1992) notes that there is debate over the nature and direction of the relationship. Although often misinterpreted, Weber (1950, as cited in Applebaum, 1992) did not establish a causal link between Protestantism and capitalism, but did note that capitalism was upheld by Protestantism. The Protestant work ethic endorsed diligence and frugality to increase the glory of God, and in so doing, supported the secular ideas of economic growth through hard work and financial saving (Nord et al., 1990). A distinctive feature of the Protestant work ethic is that all work and workers were revered to the same degree (Ciulla, 2000) and thus the idea that one type of work was superior to another was eliminated (Applebaum, 1992). The Protestant work ethic provided a means of discovering and creating oneself and implied that one could also discover one's salvation through work (Ciulla, 2000).

In the eighteenth century, Adam Smith developed a labour theory of value, in which people who performed productive work were seen as the chief foundation for society (Applebaum, 1992). In the nineteenth century, a new set of values and ethics, which treated all matters and individuals in terms of quantification, profit and loss, was put into place (Applebaum, 1992). Work and workers were now seen as a means to an end, and although the handicrafts persisted throughout the nineteenth century, they were slowly replaced by machines as the workforce adapted to factory systems, time discipline, and the necessities of wage and market systems (Applebaum, 1992).

The nineteenth century saw work ethics influenced by religious, political, social, industrial and commercial leaders (Applebaum, 1992), and the importance of work for individual and societal development became a combination of religiously- and secularly-based work ethics (Nord et al., 1990). Tilgher (1962) notes that in the

nineteenth century, work was viewed as the foundation of all material, intellectual and spiritual progress.

Marx (1906, as cited in Applebaum, 1992) asserted that humans created the world and their identity through their work. Work was of absolute importance and was defined as consisting of: the personal activity of people or work itself (labour power); instruments (tools); and the subject of the work (materials). Marx (1906, as cited in Applebaum, 1992) saw work as a process in which both people and nature participate, and he distinguished between work and labour, with work being the qualitative aspect of the process and labour as the value-creating and quantitative aspect of the process.

The American, Benjamin Franklin, was influenced by both the English and French Enlightenments of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, respectively, and was recognised by both Weber and Marx as the embodiment of the spirit of work and thrift as the path to business success (Applebaum, 1992). Although by far not the only contributor to the Enlightenment, Franklin tempered the Protestant ethic with enlightenment ideals, believing that people should strive for wealth in order to humanely use it to help society (Ciulla, 2000) and thus the enlightenment ideals merged social and political dimensions of work (Anderson, 1998). Secularised versions of the work ethic emerged, in which hard work was still encouraged but for oneself rather than for God, and thus the religious content of the work ethic was diminished (Ciulla, 2000).

By the beginning of the twentieth century, work needed to be organised to meet the needs of expanding industrial societies and Taylorism and scientific management emerged (Applebaum, 1992). American leaders and managers went to great lengths to embed the ideas of the work ethic into the workforce, to such an extent that it became ingrained, and any successes or failures in the US economy were attributed to either the workforce's adherence to, or neglect of, the work ethic (Nord et al., 1990).

However, problems with the work ethic began to grow as contradictions emerged (Applebaum, 1992). For example, work was a social duty yet its rewards were private (Rodgers, 1974, as cited in Nord et al., 1990). In fact, Rodgers (1974, as cited in Nord et al.) argues that the work ethic was largely created to reduce the discomfort caused

by social contradictions, such as the existence of factories in societies that were 'committed' to the Free Labour ideal. Nord et al. propose that an examination of ideas from holders of alternative perspectives would show that many elements of modern management, for example scientific management, are a response to the needs of managers to exercise the necessary control for efficient production while maintaining the image of the free labour ideal.

According to Taylor (1968), the nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw money as being a significant MOW, but status, security and pleasant working conditions began to be viewed as equally important factors. Roberson (1990) notes that the 1970's were a time of distress, with strikes and absenteeism increasing and national productivity growth decreasing, and he notes that subsequent analyses of the distress show that the MOW was a major cause. It should be obvious that what Roberson means, is that the conflict was caused by the factors or characteristics on which meaning was placed, as the MOW could not in itself have been a cause. Nord's (1977, as cited in Nord et al., 1990) explanation of the situation highlights this point. Nord (1977, as cited in Nord et al.) notes that conventional views of work are concerned with content and therefore the dissatisfaction and rebellion of young people that began to emerge in the workplace during the late 1960's and early 1970's may not have been due to a change in traditional work values but a change in the willingness to do what was seen as meaningless work for extrinsic rewards only.

While the prominent work ethics of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries preached moral character as the key to wealth and success, personality and psychology become viewed as the key to success in the twentieth century (Ciulla, 2000). The notion of a calling now generally refers to religious occupations, and the word vocation has come to replace what used to be referred to as a calling (Ciulla, 2000). While the words 'calling' and 'vocation' are often used interchangeably, it appears in Ciulla's (2000) work, that God determines one's calling, whilst one discovers one's vocation oneself.

Castillo (1997, par 13) notes that in the 1970's and 1980's, young people had an "allergy to work" and by 1995, work was no longer at the centre of the values and fabric of society. However, despite challenges to the work ethic (Applebaum, 1992), Nord et al. (1990), highlight the fact that the Protestant work ethic and its secularised

versions are still taken seriously by workplace leaders, by noting that much of Japan's recent success has been attributed to Japan's strong work ethic and the US's declining one. Anderson (1998) also states that the Protestant work ethic remains strong today, even among those who never traditionally embraced it, and says that the reason for this is that humans crave meaning. On the one hand, Applebaum (1992) notes that the still strong influence of the work ethic is contradicted by the projections for the future which emphasise leisure and the leisure ethic, and on the other hand he notes that the erosion of the work ethic is an impressionistic rather than a definite finding or conclusion.

Some views of work have changed over time, while some threads of opinion have remained. Some views have held spiritual and religious factors separate from work, while for others they are factors intrinsic to work. Religious and secular work ethics have responded to the context of production, market and labour systems. Work has been viewed by some as an integral part of life, while for others it is simply a means to an end. In general, the modern view is that work still holds a central role in people's lives (Applebaum, 1992) although it is "no longer inextricably intertwined with other life roles" (MOW-IRT, 1987, p. 2). Different emphasis is placed on this role by different disciplines and paradigms of thought, and this aspect, along with an examination of more modern definitions and understandings of work and meaningful work, is considered in the next section.

### ***Modern Definitions and Understandings of Work***

Mills (1956, as cited in Loscocco & Kalleberg, 1988) states that work has no inherent meaning, but that individuals and cultures attach various meanings to work activities. This section examines some of these various meanings.

### ***Perspectives of Different Disciplines and Paradigms***

The evolution of work concepts and understandings through the ages and the variety of modern understandings and definitions of work has led to different disciplines or paradigms of thought placing different emphases on different aspects of work. Religious or morally based theorists view work as a calling, as opposed to merely a

job, through which religious behaviour can be projected into the everyday world (Bell, 1997, as cited in Wolfe, 1997; Davidson & Caddell, 1994). Political scientists hold that for genuine citizenship to exist, there needs to be access to meaningful paid work, while psychology and sociology emphasise the centrality of work to individual well-being (Flora, 1999). In economics, work is for making money in order to provide purchasing power, with the loss of leisure being the only disadvantage of working (Flora, 1999).

The contrast is that while psychology and sociology also recognise the role of purchasing power for well-being, they emphasise the critical role of non-monetary aspects of the work experience (Flora, 1999). Freud (1930, as cited in Kelly & Kelly, 1994; no date, as cited in Neff, 1968) suggested that to be human is to work and love, and he illustrated the potential positives if these life dimensions are met, as well as the potential negativities if they are not. Thus, social psychology literature emphasises the psychological need for work and the psychological deprivation that occurs when these needs are not satisfactorily met (Flora, 1999). To Freud (no date, as cited in Neff, 1968) and Lantos (1943, as cited in Neff, 1968), work is an unpleasurable activity that is engaged in out of necessity. To Menninger (1942, as cited in Neff, 1968) and Oberndorf (1951, as cited in Neff, 1968), work is an activity that allows adults to gratify their sexual and aggressive impulses through altered, and thus socially, acceptable forms of behaviour. Like Freud, Menninger (1942, as cited in Neff, 1968), believes that work in itself is not pleasurable, but asserts that there are circumstances under which pleasure can become associated with work, for example, through positive feelings between co-workers or because there is an absence of excessive discomfort or fatigue. Sociological literature shares similar ideas with the psychology literature, viewing paid work as central to individual self-worth and social identity, however it emphasises that job task design, the choices individuals make, and the human environment of the workplace cannot be analysed independent of the social structure (Flora, 1999).

Physicists believe 'work' to be the product of force and displacement. However, definitions of work based on this understanding are not sufficient for explanations of human work, as there are many human actions (such as chewing one's food)



involving force that do not constitute the type of work that is being defined here (Schrecker, 1968). Some more appropriate definitions of work are needed.

### ***Defining Work***

According to Applebaum (1992), work is like a spine that structures the way people live, achieve status and self esteem, and how they make contact with material and social reality. He goes so far as to say that human society cannot exist without work. The fact that work plays a significant part in people's lives is clear, but despite this, there is no typology of characteristics to identify when an activity constitutes work (England & Harpaz, 1990), partly because, as Applebaum (1992) notes, there is no definition that is wholly satisfying. Ciulla (2000, p. 28) comments that work is an "extraordinary word" because it can be used in so many ways and to denote so many things – it is something we can do, or go to, or appreciate (as in art) for example, and it is these different uses and understandings which leads to work being something that can be necessary, restrictive, creative or purposeful. Ciulla (2000), among others, provides an in-depth examination of the word 'work' and the different dictionary versions or derivatives. Describing these definitions would, however, be repetitive of other authors.

Fox (1994, as cited in Dollarhide, 1997) identifies work as something that is unique to the individual, and a creative expression of one's inner being or soul. Lantos (1943, as cited in Neff, 1968) defines work by making a distinction between play and work, explaining that the difference lies in the end state – play is engaged in for its own sake as the gratification lies in the activity itself, while engagement in work is not done for its own sake as the gratification lies in obtaining something through working. Therefore, according to Lantos' distinction, it is not content but purpose that allows one to distinguish between work and non-work activities (Neff, 1968). This concept is supported by Locke and Taylor (1990), who suggest that work provides individuals with a sense of purpose, and Ciulla (2000), who notes that work constitutes a sense of necessity – it is done in order to achieve or acquire something that is needed. Terez (1999) states that each individual has a unique set of top-priority meanings, and he has uncovered 22 key sources of meaning in the workplace, of which purpose is the most frequently cited source of meaning. However, Brief and Nord (1990b) caution

that to merely define work as purposeful activity would leave one with a useless concept, as almost all human activity consists of purposeful activities.

Definitions of work abound, partly because, as noted by Drenth (1991, as cited in Kanungo, 1991), definitions vary from those that are restrictive, to those that are too inclusive. Thus it is essential to put qualifiers or bounds on the term (Brief & Nord, 1990b), such as Neff's (1985, p. 76) understanding, which is that "work is an instrumental or goal-directed activity designed to procure the means of subsistence".

Schwimmer (1980, as cited in Brief & Nord, 1990b) notes that with the introduction of cash crops and wage labour, subsistence was secured by the money produced by working. Thus in modern societies, work has predominantly become understood to be the activities for which one receives financial remuneration (Brief & Nord, 1990b), and with this, the life-sustaining properties of work have become emphasised (Applebaum, 1962).

The most comprehensive sources devoted to defining work appear to be those of England and Harpaz (1990) and England and Whitley (1990), which aimed to obtain a definition of working. While many sources that attempt to define work fail to detail from where, who or what the information is drawn, England and Harpaz (1990) and England and Whitley (1990) drew their information from the MOW project, conducted by the MOW-IRT, that focused on people experiencing or engaged in work. Literature on work definitions and meanings was reviewed to illuminate concepts and ideas that should be included in a definition of work. Three classes of concepts arose, namely, broad reasons or rationales for engaging in or doing work; personal states or outcomes resulting from work activities; and controls and constraints related to the context or performance of work activities (England & Harpaz, 1990; England & Whitley, 1990).

For a number of reasons, England and Harpaz's (1990) and England and Whitley (1990) did not end up with one definition of work, rather they ended up with six work definition patterns, which they labelled Pattern A-F, and which can be summarised as follows:

For pattern A individuals, work is generally a self-directed activity for which one is accountable and which adds value, with almost no negative effect attached to its performance. This concept of work suggests that individuals exchange value-adding accountability for constraint freedom, intrinsic satisfaction, and monetary income.

Pattern B individuals define work as an activity from which one can derive positive personal affect and identity. This activity is seen neither as compulsory or unpleasant but as a contribution to society, and in this idea of work, individuals gain personal income, affect and identity in exchange for contributions to society.

Pattern C individuals are those for whom work is an activity that provides profit to others and is not necessarily confined to a work place. This work activity is generally considered to be physically strenuous but with limited compulsion for its performance, therefore in this conception, individuals exchange effort for other people's profit in return for constraint freedom and monetary income.

Individuals in pattern D defined work as activity which is largely physical in nature; one has to do it; it is directed by others; and it is confined to a specific place for work. Performance of this type of work is connected to unpleasantness and not to positive affect, and this conception of working suggests that individuals exchange directed and controlled effort for monetary reward. However, England and Harpaz (1990) do note that only 4.2 % of their sample defined work as unpleasant, and therefore that viewing work as unpleasant is a minority characteristic.

For pattern E individuals, work is both physically and mentally strenuous; it is relatively unpleasant; it does not generally result in positive affect; and individuals in this pattern exchange burdensome activity for financial income.

Individuals in pattern F define working as the activity that takes place during specified time periods and does not result in positive affect, but is characterised as not being mentally strenuous or for the profit of others. In this concept of work, time and money are directly exchanged.

In addition to definitions of work, some attempts have been made to define 'meaningful work' or the 'MOW' as a concept. According to Spreitzer et al., (1997, as cited in May, Gilson & Harter, 2004), for work to be experienced as meaningful, it should facilitate both work motivation and personal growth. Caudron (1997) proposes that work can be meaningful if workers devote their talents to organisations and projects that support their values, and Ciulla (2000) states that meaningful work is activity that is rewarding and pleasurable in its own right. Morris (1985, as cited in Ciulla, 2000) used the notion of 'worthwhile work' to explain the MOW. To Morris, work could either lighten life or burden it and the difference is that in the first there is hope, while in the second there is none (Ciulla, 2000).

There are great differences between people at work, as people differ with regards to abilities, motives, what they enjoy and so on (Argyle, 1972). These differences are what prompt England and Whitely (1990) to state that the MOW is theoretically unique for every individual as they differ in background, characteristics and experiences. Similarly, Morse and Weiss (1968) comment that the MOW for an individual is determined not only by the type of work one is involved in, but by the type of person the individual is. An individual's work values, in terms of their expectations, values and beliefs, therefore act as a frame of reference for action, with regards to: what one expects and desires from work; what one has to give or wants to give in the work situation in order to achieve those outcomes; and the degree to which one identifies with work (Ruiz Quintanilla, 1991).

The above discussions support the assertion that work is unlikely to mean the same to all individuals (Freidmann & Havighurst, 1962). What makes work meaningful can therefore be considered unique to the person asked (Caudron, 1997). This uniqueness is partly due to the fact that work meanings are not constant but are part of a complex developmental process (MOW-IRT, 1981). (This aspect will be discussed in more detail in the section on 'Determining the MOW'). Since this developmental process is likely to be unique to the individual, it must be concluded that the MOW may be highly idiosyncratic (Brief & Nord, 1990b).

Arguments and discussions about work are often confused by different understandings and usages of terminology. For example, some consider work and the job to be the

same thing and others differentiate between the two. Ciulla (2000), however, notes that there is a difference between 'work' and the 'job', and explains that 'work' is something that is done with or without pay while the 'job' has a connection with work for pay or profit. The word 'job' has also become associated with work of an impersonal nature - it is merely an activity for which one gets paid and thus a separation between the person and the job is created (Ciulla, 2000).

It is evident that while there are many different definitions for work, not many people actually attempt to define what meaningful work is. As discussed, the meaning that work holds may be unique to each individual and therefore it would actually be impossible to create a unified definition of the 'MOW'. Therefore, while it may not be possible to deduce either a universal definition for work or for meaningful work, the way that people attempt to define work as a result of their experiences, gives clues as to what, for those individuals, contributes towards making work meaningful. For example, according to England and Harpaz (1990) and England and Whitely (1990), certain individuals exchange directed and controlled effort for monetary reward, and it can therefore be assumed that money contributes towards what makes work meaningful and significant to these individuals.

This section has introduced an important factor that influences the meaning that work holds for people, namely the relationship between work and money. Understanding the relationship between work and money is essential for understanding the MOW and working and therefore the topic warrants further examination.

### ***The Relationship between Work and Money***

There is a widely held belief, evident in much of the literature on work and working, that there are two major orientations towards work, namely intrinsic and extrinsic orientations (Roberson, 1990). However, despite this, some literature proposes that the needs of the majority of people in advanced industrial societies can only be met through paid work, as opposed to in the past when needs were met through social structures, religious rituals, extended families and village communities (Flora, 1999).

As the introduction of cash crops and wage labour meant that subsistence was secured by the money produced from working (Schwimmer, 1980, as cited in Brief & Nord, 1990b), modern societies came to view work as the activity for which one receives financial remuneration (Brief & Nord, 1990b). It appears that most studies on the MOW are based on this assumption - that work equals a paid job or employment. This is a pity for a review such as this, which aims to take a broader view of work experiences. The necessity to take a broader view for research in the South African context is highlighted by two points raised by Sully (1993). Namely, that views that hold work as synonymous with financial remuneration put conceptual and practical restrictions on understanding work; and definitions based on paid employment are not adequately encompassing for developing societies such as in South Africa. It is therefore necessary to examine the available evidence that work may be more than a paid activity.

Morse and Weiss (1962 & 1968) state that with the increasing complexity and industrialisation of society, work progressively became a means to earning a living, but they caution against over-generalising this trend, as this may not be the only function that work serves. While many people work because they 'have to', these kinds of statements generally refer to paid jobs and do not explain why people do other kinds of work or why some wealthy people continue to work (Cuilla, 2000). Friedmann and Havighurst (1962) found that in their study of meanings of work across five occupational categories, all groups cited sources of meaning in addition to earning a living. Similarly, Morse and Weiss (1962 & 1968) found that having a paid job served functions other than earning a living, and 80% of their participants said they would still continue to work if they already had the money to support themselves.

The reasons that were common among occupational classes in Friedmann and Havighurst's (1962) study were that associations and friendships were valued; that work was a routine which makes the time pass; work is a source of self-respect and recognition from others; and that work is a source of interesting, purposeful activity that holds intrinsic enjoyment. Similarly, in Morse and Weiss' study (1962, 1968) working was seen to provide a sense of purpose in life, a feeling of being tied to society, and it gave people something with which to occupy themselves. This is not to

say that people would continue working in the same job – many thought they may switch jobs but few thought they would stop working completely (Morse & Weiss, 1962, 1968). Morse and Weiss' (1962, 1968) findings include that a third of the sample would miss the social aspects of work the most if they did not work and over two-fifths felt they would lose something important to their general well-being.

Despite whether one would continue working when money is not a necessity, it is interesting to note that Brief and Nord (1990b) state that one's existing wealth and level of economic need affects the meaning of one's work, and this sentiment is reflected by Morse and Weiss (1962, 1968) who found that the non-monetary functions served by work are different for middle- and working-class occupations.

As some people work even when the pay is inconsequential (Brief & Nord, 1990b) and others say they would continue working even when they had the financial means not to (Morse & Weiss, 1962, 1968), it is clear that definitions of work that focus on financial pay do not provide an understanding of the variety of motives for which people engage in the activities for which they receive financial remuneration (Brief & Nord, 1990b). Although England and Whitely (1990) state that work provides the fringe benefits and income that constitutes the major part of economic well-being for the majority of individuals in industrial societies, and England and Harpaz (1990) note that in their study economic rationale was the most frequently cited reason to work, there is clearly a broader social value or significance attached to working beyond financial or economic need (England & Whitely, 1990).

Morse and Weiss (1962 & 1968) note that if money is the primary reason for working, there is no explanation for the negative effects of unemployment and retirement, and according to Wilson (1996, as cited in Ciulla, 2000), who draws these conclusions from observations of jobless people living in low-employment neighbourhoods, a job provides for more than material needs, by satisfying psychological and social needs such as discipline, regularity, self-efficacy, and connectedness. Furthermore, from the times when people's surnames identified the work that they did, for example, Baker or Thatcher, there has been a relationship between one's identity and work (Ciulla, 2000).

Puth (1994) asserts that most people have needs (psychological and social), other than for worker benefits, that can be satisfied in the workplace and notes that without satisfaction of these needs, workers will lack motivation. According to Anderson (1998), due to the marriage between capitalism and the Protestant work ethic, work became a spiritual activity that continued out of ethical duty long after material needs were satisfied. These comments identify a potential relationship between human needs and MOW, however, the literature on motivation has purposefully not been considered in this review, as previously explained. Disregarding the role of motivation in the MOW does not, however, negate the acknowledgement that these comments clearly identify that financial reward is not essential for work to be meaningful (Anderson, 1998).

Although it is clear that people do not only work for the money, Puth (1994) notes that in most circumstances nowadays, people expect to be paid for the work they do. Theron (2003), notes that in legal discourse, the term 'work' is increasingly used to refer to a widening range of economic activity, and Theron uses the example that, whereas ten years ago South Africans would most likely have referred to informal parking attendants as beggars, they now acknowledge that this is the work those people do, even if the acknowledgement is somewhat flippant. According to Handy (no date, as cited in Wagner, 2002), work can be divided into four categories, of which only one is related to pay. From such viewpoints, work is a much broader concept than activity for pay.

Some authors, such as Theron (2003) and Handy (no date, as cited in Wagner, 2002) introduce some types of work that have not often been considered as work, namely, begging, home work, gift work and study work, and thus the topic of work and non-work is introduced. In order to understand the MOW, Sully (1993) also notes that it is necessary to consider aspects of work and non-work. The next section considers two of the non-work domains most relevant to this research

### ***The Relationship between Work and Non-work Domains***

In developed societies, the general population (the layman's view) has come to view leisure as the opposite of work (Sully, 1993). In developing societies, where



unemployment is widespread, one can therefore imagine that this is the non-work phenomenon that has a tremendous influence on people's experiences of the MOW. As South Africa has elements of both developed and developing societies, leisure and unemployment are the non-work domains that warrant some consideration. These domains are in themselves too broad to examine in-depth but their significance to a study on the MOW will be shown.

De Grazia (1962) notes that the word leisure is often used interchangeably with the words 'spare-time' or 'free-time', but comments that there is an ethical note or hint that misused spare time does not constitute leisure. Similarly, Argyle (1972) states that for leisure to be satisfying in an important sense, it needs to be a kind of moral equivalent for work. In his discussion on work and leisure, Argyle (1972) notes that many types of leisure are similar to work in that they involve the expenditure of effort for a specific purpose. However, work and leisure can be distinguished by certain characteristics, such as: leisure pursuits are normally unsupervised; and they are voluntary, being carried out when and where one chooses (Argyle, 1972). This idea of choice is an important one and Ciulla (2000) notes that work and its meaning are very different when there is choice involved. Thus leisure is more than having time available - it is a state of being in which, if activity is performed, it is done for its own sake, rather than as a means to an end (de Grazia, 1962; Snir & Harpaz, 2002).

While Primeau (1996, as cited in Snir & Harpaz, 2002) found that distinctions between work and leisure are culturally bound, Rosseau (1978, as cited in Sully, 1993) suggests that there is a connection between the form of occupation and the work / leisure relationship, with strenuous occupations leading to the development of compensatory patterns, although spill-over relationships tend to be more common.

It is clear from this discussion that leisure is not merely the opposite of work. However, it does constitute a significant part of modern life. In fact, leisure has become an industry (Kahn, 1983, as cited in Sully, 1993) and lotteries and financial companies promote their products and seduce customers with visions of the freedom to live a 'leisurely life' (Ciulla, 2000). Kabanoff (1980, as cited in Sully, 1993) notes that with industrialisation and the disruption of previously integrated roles, the relationship between work and leisure has become problematic. While Riesman and

Bloomberg (1962) note that leisure is threatening the significance of work, the MOW-IRT (1987, as cited in Sully, 1993) did not find this to be true, and they conclude that for their participants, work was viewed as more important than leisure affiliations.

Using Aristotle's criteria for leisure, the notion of choice can be used to illustrate the difference between leisure and unemployment (Barnes, 1984, as cited in Ciulla, 2000). Leisure is the freedom from the necessity to work, encompassing choice in the matter, while unemployment means people are *not free to work* and there is little or no choice in the matter (in Barnes, 1984, as cited in Ciulla, 2000).

It is interesting to note that Aristotle (as cited in de Grazia, 1962) thought that the Spartan empire collapsed when they were not at war because they did not know what to do with the leisure that peace time brought them. Similarly, Ciulla (2000) discusses a sociographic study conducted in the 1930's in a small Austrian community in which all the inhabitants were unemployed. Instead of using the time to do all the things that people dream they would do if they did not need to work, detrimental psychological factors came into play and the people became apathetic, and thus, not only had they lost their work but they had lost their ability to enjoy not working (Ciulla, 2000). Ciulla (2000) makes a very interesting comment in relation to this study, pointing out that perhaps the people of the community had no leisure because they had no work, in which case, they had no 'free' time because they had no 'constrained' time. Therefore, if one cannot have leisure without having work, and if leisure and work are inseparably interconnected for a healthy psychological state to occur (Helldorfer, 1971, as cited in Sully, 1993), the logical conclusion is that unemployed people will experience decreased psychological well-being.

Wilson (1996, as cited in Wolfe, 1997) notes that work provides a framework for behaviour and patterns of interaction and therefore that a person without work is not a full person because they lack the system of concrete expectations and goals that work provides. Fox's (1994, as cited in Dollarhide, 1997) statement about the absence of work paints an even graver picture: that the absence of work has the potential to create war within oneself, between communities and even between nations. When considering the South African situation regarding unemployment, and some of the other critical socio-economic problems that plague South Africans and their

communities, Fox's statement appears to hold significant truth. It is therefore interesting to consider some of the findings from the only South African study that was uncovered during the search for literature on the MOW.

The following are some of Sully's (1993) findings regarding the relationship between work and non-work in South Africa: work was associated with material gain, while non-work was associated with little or no material gain; while work was recognised as involving responsibility and possible submission to another, non-work was found to imply independence and freedom of choice; non-work was seen as for the benefit of the individual, while work was viewed as for the purpose of benefiting others. In general, work was associated with strain, tension and struggle, whereas non-work was associated with relief, refreshment and peace; work was associated with mental effort while non-work was associated with physical effort; and work was described as being difficult and essential in comparison to non-work which was seen to be easy and unimportant (Sully, 1993).

With regard to unemployment, Sully (1993) found that unemployed people associated work with a gainful outcome, strain, the ability to plan ahead, and being controlled by another; while not having work was associated with a lack of gain, relief from strain, an inability to plan ahead, and self-control. The negative effects of unemployment were clear in Sully's (1993) study but he also found that employment did not assume an enlarged importance because other forms of work remained valued.

It is easy to imagine that work takes on different meanings for those who have experienced unemployment, and therefore the issue of unemployment gives rise to the fact that context affects meaning. In this review, unemployment could have also been examined as a contextual factor affecting the meaning that work and working holds for a person. Some of the contextual factors that may influence the MOW require further examination.

### ***Contextual Issues Affecting the MOW***

Gillham (2000) asserts that human behaviour is partly determined by context and Bromley (1986, p. xi) observes that "the most important and interesting aspects of

human nature are...context-dependent". Furthermore, Fineman (1991) notes that the construed environment always determines meaning. Importantly, Salancik and Brand (1992) conclude after their research on the effects of context on the MOW, that context has a strong influence on MOW.

This discussion moves on to consider some of the diverse contextual variables that may influence people's personal histories and experiences and therefore the meaning that work holds for them.

### ***The Individual Context***

Wittgenstein (1953, as cited in Ciulla, 2000) notes that words derive their meaning from the people and the ways in which they are used. For example, taking a nap may be 'hard work' for someone with a back injury, but for those who have no knowledge of the injury it may be hard to understand why sleeping could be considered as work (Wittgenstein, 1953, as cited in Ciulla, 2000). Understanding how words take on unique meanings according to how, and by whom, they are used, reinforces the notion that meaning may be largely unique to the individual, as previously discussed.

Ciulla (2000) suggests that attitude influences what constitutes work - viewing work as a calling, for example, refers to an attitude towards work, not a type of work. It follows that if people's attitudes influence what constitutes work, it is likely that attitudes will have an impact on one's work experiences. Furthermore, Ciulla (2000) notes that the word 'work' is not only an activity, but a set of ideas and values related to that activity. Ciulla (2000) states that there are four sets of values that shape decisions about work, and these values are: meaningful work and work that is interesting and /or important to you or society; leisure or free time; money; and security.

Nord et al. (1990) suggest that a society's work values may be a result of work activity as opposed to a cause, and they advise that not only should work values not be treated as socially constructed notions, but that there should not be an expectation of uniformity across people, place and time. This is partly due to the fact that social and economic contexts and environments are not static, and as Ciulla (2000) states,

people's values differ according to different times and stages in life. The purpose that work serves for an individual may change over time (Brief & Nord, 1990b), as well as what is experienced as meaningful, because successful or unsuccessful experiences may lead people to change their expectations, values or actions (Lock & Taylor, 1990). Of importance and interest here is the idea that one's work values and experiences are not constant, as they change according to other experiences and life stages, and therefore what one experiences as meaningful is also likely to change over time. The interviews utilised in this research attempted to uncover whether this is true.

There are many individually-related factors that may be examined here, but this section focuses on age; education; culture; family; and spirituality and religion, especially in the context of the workplace.

### *Age.*

While at first glance age may seem to be a demographic factor and not a contextual one, the fact that age has social meaning means that it has the potential to influence the meaning that work and working holds for someone. Therefore it can be viewed as part of the context that determines meaning for an individual.

Freysinger (1995, as cited in Snir & Harpaz, 2002) comments that because age is a biological, psychological, sociocultural and historical variable, there is a likelihood of it having significance for the meaning of leisure. For the same reasons then, it is likely to have significance for the meaning of working too.

Miller and Simon (1979, as cited in Harpaz et al., 2002) found that age was not a factor that influenced what was considered to be important and desirable in work, as similar values were shared across age groups. Similarly, in their study, England and Harpaz (1990) found that age created no significant influence. Loscocco and Kalleberg (1988) note that most studies on the MOW do not consider the ways in which work attitudes differ according to one's life stage, and similarly, that studies on age and social change have not considered the MOW. However, they state that it can be deduced from sociological perspectives on age, that the meaning individuals derive from work changes as they move through various life stages and that meaning is

characterised by both work and non-work roles, and different historical contexts (Loscocco & Kalleberg, 1988).

Harpaz et al., (2002) cite a number of studies which lead them to state that it is both normative and universal that attitudes towards work are derived from age-related experiences. However, age should not be considered on its own but viewed within a broader context. As Loscocco and Kalleberg (1988) note, where organisational position is closely linked with age, as in Japan, differences in the MOW for older and younger workers may in fact be a result of differences in the nature of their work roles, rather than due to the difference in age.

### ***Education.***

Using the same thinking as to why age is considered a contextual factor, because of its potential to influence the MOW, so too can education be considered as a contextual factor. According to the MOW-IRT (1981), increasing levels of education in industrial societies definitely have an impact on the MOW. England and Harpaz (1990) also found that educational level attained had a significant influence on how people defined work. It emerged as a factor in four of the six pattern distributions identified by England and Harpaz (1990), as previously discussed in the section on defining work. While the cited sources note the impact of education on the MOW, they do not delve into explanations or descriptions of this impact.

### ***Culture.***

Culture is also considered to be an influencing contextual factor. Brief and Nord (1990b) note that the word work, or the equivalent, has different meanings in different societies. Ciulla (2000) notes that different cultures have different attitudes towards work. Further, different cultures value different things, and these values provide the basis for norms regarding what is appropriate in different situations (Schwartz, 1999). For example, in societies where material success is highly valued, work that does not provide financial or material reward is unlikely to be considered as favourably as well-paid work.

Gregson, Simonsen and Vaiou (1999) conducted a study on the meaning of different forms of work in three different European countries and they conclude that categories of work are contextually and culturally embedded with sets of meanings. Similarly, England and Harpaz (1990) concluded that national differences in how people define working are greater and more general than those caused by demographic and organisational influences. According to Reisman (1955, as cited in Fox, 1980), the MOW is primarily a cultural issue, and cultures differ in the way work is interpreted in their value-scheme. Argyle (1972) states that cultural attitudes to work vary considerably depending on the circumstances. Therefore, although work experiences and the subsequent MOW may be unique to the individual, a study on the MOW should not be confined to the individual level (Fox, 1980).

### ***Family.***

Brief and Nord (1990d) state that the family is a variable that affects the MOW, but that this factor is largely ignored by organisational psychologists. Although both researchers of the MOW and research participants often behave as if work and family are separate, work and family are linked in several ways (Brief & Nord, 1990d), for example, work provides the means to acquire household goods (Parsons & Smelser, 1956, as cited in Brief & Nord, 1990d) and both work and family make claims on one's time (Brief & Nord, 1990d).

According to Brief and Nord (1990d), families play an important role in socialising new generations towards the world of work and they recommend that a study of the MOW cannot be done without an assessment of the other roles that individuals hold, of which family roles may be the most important. This research will therefore include an examination of the importance of work in relation to other life roles, such as family.

### ***Spirituality, Religion, Work and Meaning.***

Wheatley (1999) says that in recent years, many interesting questions have arisen regarding the spirit and work and explains that this is due to the increasing chaos of the world in which we live. Cox (1984, as cited in Nord et al., 1990) observed that

religion was becoming increasingly important in secular societies. Nord et al., (1990) suggest that the recognition of the need to study work values beyond the context of the work environment raises the possibility of reintroducing nonsecular values into studies of work. Similarly, Brief (1991) comments that perhaps it is time to consider more deeply the relationship between work and nonsecular concerns.

While historically, views on the relationship between religion and work have predominantly focused on organised religion, modern views are considering more widespread ideas about religion and spirituality. Barrett (no date, as cited in Mariotti, 1999) identifies a relationship between spirituality and work through proposing that spirituality is about finding meaning at work, making a difference, and being of service to humanity and society. Ciulla (2000), however, is not so enthusiastic about spirituality at work. She notes that spirituality at work provides a combination of 'religion-lite' and 'therapy-lite' – it is an approach that attempts to satisfy what people desire from religion, but without the faith, and what people gain from therapy but without the effort to change. Thus Ciulla (2000) likens spirituality at work to 'pop psychology' and management trends that try to make people feel good without addressing the real problems.

Leigh (1997) notes that although many organisations were trying to create workplaces in which a unified vision and purpose beyond making money is shared, leaders were hesitant to use the word 'spiritual' because it makes people think of religion. To avoid these terms, Leigh (1997) calls this trend 'values-based business', and says it has emerged in response to the organisational leader's recognition of a need to create meaning and purpose for their employees. Robinson (no date, as cited in Welch, 1998), however, states that the search for meaning at work has been driven by employees, not employers. For Welch (1998), the 'Nineties spirituality' tried to encompass environmental concerns, socioeconomic values and business ethics, and tried to reject hard-nosed capitalism. For some, it provided a chance to apply religious beliefs and values to their work and for others it was more of a feeling that their own inner spirits need to be nurtured for the benefit of their behaviour and lifestyle (Welch, 1998).



Garcia-Zamor (2003) points out that in the 1990's more than 300 books on workplace spirituality were on the shelves of American bookshops and, while religion and spirituality were once taboo in corporate environments, employees are now seeking more meaning from work and business leaders are seeking new ways to motivate their workers and to conduct business in a socially responsible way. Wheatley (1999) proposes that to succeed in these times, the domain of spiritual traditions needs to be entered.

Spirituality and religion is largely a factor that is relevant and relative to the individual. However, it is also clear from the above discussion that it can be a factor on the societal and organisational level too. This examination moves on to look at additional factors that are influential at these levels.

### ***The Broader Societal and Environmental Context***

#### ***Societal and occupational class.***

According to Taylor (1968), occupations contribute more to social status than other aspects of life. Similarly, Fox (1980) states that personal meanings in work are correlated with social stratification as occupations are closely linked to social class, and so the way individuals experience work is linked to their location in societal class structures.

Morse and Weiss (1962, 1968) found that individuals in typical middle class occupations emphasised the interest factor in their work and the sense of accomplishment that comes from work done well, while individuals in typical working class occupations emphasised the necessity to be involved in a directed activity which would occupy hands, minds, and time. Morse and Weiss (1962, 1968) also found that professional jobs are more important to their occupants than working class jobs to theirs. Similarly, Near et al., (1980, as cited in Locke & Taylor, 1990) found that the importance of work varied according to occupation, with people in lower skilled jobs viewing their work as less important than those in higher skilled jobs.

Fox (1980) illustrates the differences between occupational classes by noting that over 80% of professors, scientists and lawyers would choose similar work again if they had the choice, while only 21% of unskilled steelworkers and 16% of unskilled car-workers would do so. Fox (1980) states that lower occupational strata still view work as a necessary evil for the survival of themselves and their families - little personal identification with work is experienced and there is a lack of moral involvement.

In Friedmann and Havighurst's (1962) study, which involved determining the MOW across different occupational categories, earning a living was found to be for steelworkers the reason for working their jobs, although alternative meanings were also identified. In the same study, retail sales people found meaning in a range of aspects, of which the most frequently mentioned were having something to do or think about, and association and friendship; while the role of being of service to others was the most frequently cited source of meaning for physicians (Freidmann & Havighurst, 1962).

While the extrinsic and instrumental benefits of working are also valued by classes higher up the occupational ladder, Fox (1980) notes that these people are more involved and invested in their work and Friedmann and Havighurst (1962) found that classes higher up the occupational ladder stress the non-financial meanings of work to a greater extent than workers involved in heavy industry.

### ***Technology and Change.***

While work may lie at the foundation of human existence and society (Anderson, 1998; Neff, 1968), Accornero (1980, as cited in Castillo, 1997) already commented that over the previous 25 years, the interest in the MOW, and changes in attitudes towards it, has varied considerably. Even earlier, Taylor (1968) noted that there was a widespread impression that contemporary workers were losing their incentive to work, but that it was more a case of the traditional meanings of work being frustrated and replaced by technology.

According to Argyle (1972), the growth of civilisation has been accompanied and largely caused by the development of technology. Due to increasingly sophisticated

information technology and economic pressures, the traditional boundaries between organisations, family, individuals, community and home-life are disappearing (Guevara & Ord, 1996) and the nature of work is changing (Anderson, 1998; Arnold, Cooper & Robertson, 1995; Frese, 2000). The MOW-IRT (1981) point out that the nature of work is affected by changes in legal and societal conceptions of rights regarding work and working. For example, the introduction into the workplace of previously disadvantaged groups, women, racial minority groups and protected age categories, as has been increasingly happening in South Africa, has an effect on employment practices and policies. These changes may be inevitable and therefore if, and how, they are affecting the meaning that work holds for people, is of concern.

Guevara and Ord (1996) assert that individuals, in their search for deeper levels of meaning, organise their experiences around three areas, namely, presence and belonging; relationships; and contribution. However, they note that the demise of the traditional organisation will challenge the meaning wrought through these three areas/dimensions. The physical environment of the workplace provides a sense of belonging and so with the increasing absence of distinctive physical work environments, much of the meaning created through experiences of belonging, may diminish (Guevara & Ord, 1996). For example, shared values and beliefs resulting from the organisational culture, largely experienced through the physical environment of work, enable individuals to create meaning through which they are able to place themselves in the work context (Guevara & Ord, 1996) and therefore this important vehicle for the creation of meaning will be lost if the physical dimension of organisations diminish. With regards to the area of belonging, the meanings people create around the realm of work will be questioned as the traditional status symbols that surround permanent employment in traditional, hierarchical organisations begin to disappear (Guevara & Ord, 1996).

In addition to providing an arena in which meaning can be derived from belonging, work is an important realm for meaning to be created through relationships, as work generally involves almost continuous interactions with other people (Guevara & Ord, 1996). Argyle (1972) however, noted that while technology designers do pay attention to the physiological properties of man, such as what can be seen or heard, attention is not given to how technology will affect the interest factor of work or how technology

affects the formation of relationships. Guevara and Ord (1996) suggest that with the changes occurring in modern workplaces, the nature of relationships will change in two main ways: demographically changing workforces (especially due to South Africa's new labour laws) will change the relationships between people; and the context in which relationships form will change. Work relationships have traditionally been formed through physical presence, interaction and communications, but with an increase in remote collaborations, global communications and networking, actual presence will be replaced by virtual presence and the context of relationships will be different (Guevara & Ord, 1996). In these contexts, people can only, at best, make assumptions about others based on previous interactions. These changes will make it difficult for individuals to determine where they stand in relation to others (Guevara & Ord, 1996).

The challenges and changes in the areas of belonging and relationships will directly affect the dimension of contribution, for with dispersed working environments and therefore non-physical relationships with other people, it may be difficult to determine one's perceived value and relevance to these others (Guevara & Ord, 1996).

With regards to searching for meaning in work, Guevara and Ord (1996) raise two important problems that may be encountered if organisations are undergoing change, namely, that people may experience fear and anxiety due to a lack of control over external events; and there will be a lack of shared contexts, through and in which meaning can be created. If it is true that meaning is created through a relationship between our core selves and other realms, the collapse of the work realm will mean that new realms will need to be sought in order for meaning to be created (Guevara & Ord, 1996). Guevara and Ord (1996) suggest three areas from which work-related meanings may emerge in the future, namely: a shift in basic value systems; a return to home and community as the prime location for work activities; and a new work ethos that locates authority and responsibility with the individual as opposed to an external agency. One of these shifts has already been identified through the examination of the choice of the organisation on which to focus this research – the organisation is located in the community in response to a changing context.

Guevara and Ord (1996) propose that with the demise of the work realm as it has been known, there will be an increase in the importance placed on enjoyment from work, work that is meaningful and quality of life; and that work will become something that fits into one's life as opposed to life fitting into one's work.

### ***Organisational Context***

Fineman (1991) explains that people might refer to organisations as if they are solid, physical structures, but that when people are working in them, they do not experience 'the organisation', but observe and experience the processes in operation within them, whether they are human or machine processes. These experiences are then filtered through a person's personal history, and work meanings are formed and reformed (Fineman, 1991).

It is felt that the specific context of the organisation, on which this research is focused, will have a strong influence on the meaning that work holds. It warrants being discussed in more detail, and therefore organisational context has only been considered briefly and in general terms in this section. First though, a review of what has been covered in this chapter is useful.

### ***Summation***

It is essential to examine context in a study such as this because as Brief and Nord (1990b) emphasise, the word 'work' has no absolute or universal meaning and is therefore determined by the context of the individual or society, for the nature of work and the conditions under which it is done, vary on a number of dimensions.

An examination of the historical perspectives of work highlighted some of the central views and changes in the work meanings that have emerged through the ages. This examination was followed by a consideration of more modern ideas and understandings of work, including an examination of how different disciplines and paradigms of thought view work, the relationship between work and money and how non-work experiences may have an impact on experiences of work. An examination of some of the contextual factors that have the potential to impact the MOW identified

the following as relevant to this research: the individual's context, including age, education, culture and family; and the broader context of societal and occupational class, and the changes stimulated by technology.

Other key findings are that the relationship between work and nonsecular concerns, and the impact of religion, appear to have been overlooked in studies on the MOW and work experiences (Davidson & Caddell, 1994). Previous overlooking of the impact of religion has a twofold implication for this study, considering that the organisation on which this research is focused is a religious organisation. First, a basis on which to investigate the impact of religion on the MOW is lacking, and secondly, as it is a religious organisation, it is envisaged that religion will be a factor that affects the work experience, and therefore the likelihood is that there will be a lack of existing literature against which to compare the findings of this research. This chapter also draws attention to the fact that the MOW in South Africa may be influenced by unemployment and socio-economic conditions different from those in countries where the MOW has been studied. This review now moves on to a more in-depth examination of the organisational context, as explained above.

## Chapter Three

### The MOW in Caring Organisations

Briefly, the organisational context of this research encompasses working in a caring profession with chronically or terminally ill people, specifically children with HIV/AIDS. This chapter considers the existing literature relevant to this organisational context because the people, the nature of the work, and the challenge of working in a new domain are expected to be important for understanding the MOW in this context.

Although children are the focal point of the work in this organisation, the work falls within the context of healthcare, as it involves caring for children with HIV/AIDS. Therefore, while the researcher is aware of the body of literature concerned with child-care work in general, the adopted focus of this review is on caring professions and caring for the sick, as this was considered to be more characteristic of the work than the fact that it involves working with children.

Benner (1990, p. 17) states that the goal of health care should be to create a system that is based upon “care as good in itself, a human right, and a practice of commitment”, but from looking at a variety of sources, it appears that there are a number of different views and understandings of what care and caring really mean. In fact, as Leininger (1990) notes, human care is a taken-for-granted, yet elusive, largely unknown and unexplained concept. Benner (1990) states that caring means different things in different relational contexts, and she paints a thorough picture of some of the differences in the concept of caring that different relational contexts may elicit, which make trying to define care and caring even more difficult. What follows is a brief examination of what it means to give care or be involved in caring.

Wright (1987) highlights a crucial ambiguity that emerges when thinking about caring, by pointing out that people can care for one another by doing things that meet a person's needs, but that this can be done without any feelings of care for the person. If this is the case, the opposite must be true too, that is, one may care for another person and yet not actually take any care of that person. Thus caring emerges as something that can either refer to a series of actions, or to the psychological or emotional states and attitudes that may or may not accompany action. Benner (1990) notes that these different understandings of caring are often hard to separate analytically and in practice, but Wright (1987) highlights how this separation may emerge by noting that in health care arenas where people often die, the emotional or psychological aspect of caring may be considered as too difficult and this is likely to result in active caring taking precedence over emotional involvement.

It is also interesting to consider the question 'Who cares?', which Wuthnow (1995) remarks is commonly used to rhetorically mean that 'it makes no difference'. This question and its accepted meaning link the notions of 'care' and 'difference', lending itself to the idea that caring means making a difference.

While it is possible to learn and be taught about the caring actions required for health care, such as how to monitor symptoms and take care of patients' physical needs, certain people may be predisposed to the psychological and emotional states that are prerequisites for caring attitudes, through factors such as personality, social context and upbringing. Wuthnow (1995) states that in contrast to many psychological theories, he found that caring is more likely to emerge from personal experiences of care (for example, in one's family) than from empathy with other people's pain, but that new understandings of caring may be learnt through experience and involvement in caring work, such as through volunteering.

Wright (1987) notes that definitions of caring may depend on a number of things, such as one's ethical orientation, but he considers it worth noting three general characteristics. First, caring is a function of human interrelatedness - if someone is not seen as a person instead of an object, interrelation won't be perceived, and if interrelation is not perceived, one person cannot care for the other. Secondly, while it does not mean that another person's values should be accepted as one's own, caring



requires recognition that the other person's values are as important as one's own. Thirdly, while the care of self should not be negated, caring requires some self-sacrifice on behalf of another.

### ***Caring, Health Care, Ethics and Morality***

Callahan and Hanson (1999) note that due to the nature of health care, it is both crucial and necessary that good caring also involves technical excellence. Although there is no inherent contradiction between cure and care, an eagerness to cure and therefore a bias towards, and focus on, cure has led to the need for care being obscured and damaged (Callahan & Hanson, 1999; Stein, 2004). This aspect will be considered later, in relation to caring for chronic and terminal illnesses.

Medically-related care is primarily characterized by the responsibility of one person to respond and provide a service to the needs of another and it is often unidirectional, as the value of health care is not dependent upon the carer receiving attention from the patient (Bowden, 1997). Thus the practice of care in the health care arena is different from care in freely-chosen relations between people (Bowden, 1997). While there is no obligation on people to become involved in health care work, once such a role is adopted, moral responsibilities automatically arise (Evans, 1990). Similarly, Hawley (1990) states that moral burdens arise due to involvement in people's lives, and that these burdens are unavoidable when working within the health care arena.

While many occupations require certain moral responsibilities, such as looking after the health and safety of one's customers on an airplane, a moral dimension to health care work emerges due to the nature of the work and the relationships that form between the health care worker and the subject/recipient of their work (Evans, 1990). Evans (1990) cautions that while this moral dimension makes health care work more personally demanding, ignoring this moral dimension will lead to inefficient health care practice and moral culpability. There will always be moral aspects involved when a person in a position of trust has to make decisions about vulnerable people, and illness brings both emotional and physical vulnerability (Hawley, 1990).

### ***Health Care, Resources and the Concept of Justice***

Evans (1990) notes that in the UK, crises arise almost on a weekly basis, due to a shortage in resources. Resources are even more critical in South Africa. Only 11% of the South African annual budget for health care goes towards the primary, secondary and tertiary care of 80% of the population, who do not have health insurance (Benetar, 2004) and it is generally accepted that many of the problems arising in South African hospitals are directly due to resource shortages.

Due to the finite nature of most resources, justice becomes an important moral concern (Hawley, 1990; Wright, 1987). The concept of justice arises because of “sympathy and consideration for the most unfortunate” (Hawley, 1990, p. 13). The issue of justice enters the ethical and moral arena due to resource constraints and because of choices that need to be made regarding who should receive medical care. People who subscribe to utilitarian ethics may argue that preventative schemes are preferable to expensive care for the terminally or incurably ill, and while this may be logically argued, views such as these appear to others as lacking in compassion (Hawley, 1990). This is not the place to discuss how such ethical and moral decisions can and should be made, for example on the basis of need or on the likelihood of health sustainability, but it is necessary to recognise that regardless of how decisions are made, decisions about who should receive treatment are difficult and involve an obvious moral aspect (Hawley, 1990). The need to make morally difficult decisions usually arises when faced with a patient with a chronic or terminal illness. Working with this type of illness is what the participants in this study do, and therefore more attention to this aspect is necessary.

### ***Caring for People with Chronic or Terminal Illness***

The experience of caring for chronically or terminally ill patients is not the same for everyone. For example, Backer, Hannon and Russell (1982) note that some studies on physicians show that they tend to withdraw when patients are defined as dying and that they may develop impersonal attitudes, while others have found that physicians working with the terminally ill feel that it is their duty to devote more of their time to their patients. While considering working with chronic and terminal illnesses from an

individual perspective is beyond the scope of this review, some general aspects of chronic and terminal care that are relevant for this study must be examined.

### ***Cure and Care***

It is generally accepted that the role of doctors is to cure or improve their patient's health, but when patients are terminally ill, the power to do this and the doctor's ability to control the situation are diminished and medical care becomes more precarious (Benoliel, 1974, as cited in Backer et al., 1982). Weisman (1974, as cited in Backer et al.) describes the four main goals of doctor-patient care, namely: diagnosis; treatment; relief; and safe conduct, and notes that while the goal of diagnosis is the same for nonterminal and terminal patients, the other three take on different meanings when caring for terminal patients, especially the goal of treatment. Therefore the loss that doctors may experience when a patient dies is contributed to not only by the feelings of loss that accompany the death of someone, but also by the doctor's perceived loss of professional competence (Benoliel, 1974, as cited in Backer et al.). As Yalom (1978, as cited in Small, 1993) notes, in achievement-oriented Western countries and cultures, death has somehow become equated with failure.

While modern medicine has increased opportunities for prolonged life (Egbert & Parrott, 2004) and while struggling against death is an important goal of medicine and health care, there needs to be an acceptance that all people eventually die and that not all death is a result of medical failure – at some point the level at which medical skills cease to be effective for prolonging life will be reached (Callahan & Hanson, 1999). Instead of treating death as the ultimate enemy, some circumstances may benefit from the possibility of a peaceful death being enhanced through humane care of the dying (Callahan & Hanson, 1999). While the healing function of medicine is comprised of both cure and care, when medicine cannot cure, care can still ensure a certain amount of healing, for example through learning to live and cope with a permanent illness (Callahan & Hanson, 1999). Thus the role of palliative or hospice care is introduced.

## *Palliative and Hospice Care*

In chronic illnesses, the focus shifts from cure to the management of the illness (Callahan & Hanson, 1999). Although medicine cannot take responsibility for what people bring to their own experience of dying, a peaceful death can be achieved through the minimization of pain and suffering and through adequate palliation (Callahan & Hanson, 1999).

Without going into the origins of palliative care and the definitional arguments concerning palliative and terminal care, palliative care is simply put, an approach to illness that emphasises patient comfort over curative treatment and focuses on enhancing the quality of life; and hospice care is the most prevalent type of palliative care (Seale, 1989, as cited in Decker & Young, 1991; Stein, 2004).

Hayslip and Leon (1992, as cited in Egbert & Parrott, 2003) note that the word 'hospice' does not refer to a physical place for the dying but to a specific philosophy of health care. This philosophy is to provide care for patients for whom traditional medical treatment cannot be, or is no longer, effective (Egbert & Parrott, 2003). As opposed to the aim of traditional medical care, which is to provide curative treatment in order to prolong life, hospice care focuses on comfort and quality of life for the final stages of a patient's illness, for both the patient and for their family (Egbert & Parrott, 2003; Stein, 2004). Hospice care usually involves a team-orientation towards medical care, the management of symptoms such as pain, and emotional and spiritual support (National Hospice Foundation, 2000, as cited in Egbert & Parrott, 2003; Perrollaz & Mollica, 1981, as cited in Decker & Young, 1991).

Callahan (2000, as cited in Ulla et al., 2003) notes that in the twenty-first century, helping a patient have a peaceful death is just as important a part of medicine as helping to avert death.

Bradshaw (1996, as cited in Clark & Seymour, 1999) stated that hospice work, without religious values, would create a reality without meaning and a future without hope, and she argued that real compassion and morality stem from religious values. Thus, religious beliefs have a key role in hospice care. Wuthnow (1995) also notes

that religious commitment influences caring behaviours - in his study with American teenagers, he found that experiencing God's love was often an important reason behind becoming involved in volunteer work.

Wuthnow (1995) states that by emphasising a believer's duty to God, religious involvement gives authority to caring, and that this sense of duty involves demonstrating the love of God to other people. In the Christian faith, this often means enacting the teachings of Jesus, many of which focused on taking care of people's needs (Wuthnow, 1995).

### ***The Institutional Context for Terminal Care***

Backer et al. (1982) note that nurses operate both independently and interdependently with the institution/health care system and that they are therefore affected by the values of this system. They discuss a study by Quint (1966, as cited in Backer et al.), in which it was found that nurses' experiences of death differed according to the context - a ward where the emphasis was on patient recovery meant that patients were not defined as dying and therefore that nurses did not have to deal with them on that basis, was compared to a unit where the emphasis was on providing patients comfort until their death. Thus it is clear how a context and its values can influence how death is approached and dealt with, for example, the context can either protect one from, or force one to face, death.

### ***HIV/AIDS as a Chronic or Terminal Illness***

On the one hand, HIV/AIDS is a terminal disease which requires frequent and intensive medical intervention, and on the other hand, it is a progressive chronic disease requiring long-term family commitment and involvement (Reidy & Taggart (1991). The notion that HIV/AIDS as a terminal illness is changing somewhat to that of a chronic illness is largely because of developments in HIV/AIDS drugs, (Walker, Pomeroy, McNeil & Franklin, 1996). However, due to the scarcity of resources in South Africa, as previously mentioned, this change only holds partial relevance for the South African context.

It was discussed earlier, that some of the traditional goals of nursing and medical care are to cure, to prolong life and to improve the quality of life when cure is not possible (Bennett, Michie & Kippax, 1991). As there is no known cure for AIDS and the treatments that may prolong the lives of HIV/AIDS patients have distressing side effects (Bennett et al., 1991), the ability of AIDS carers to perform some of their traditional caring functions is thwarted. Furthermore, while the available treatments for HIV/AIDS have led to an increased lifespan for those infected with the disease (Cates et al., 1990, as cited in Walker et al., 1996), this in itself has generated problems for both people with AIDS and for their caregivers because of the long duration of decline and the chronic nature of the disease (Walker et al.). For many reasons therefore, Buhrich (1989, as cited in Bennett et al.) warns those involved in caring for PWHA against the 'inevitable disappointments' that may arise during their care.

Whether positive or negative, Pakenham, Dadds and Lennon (2002) state that caring for people with AIDS is likely to have a significant impact on the caregivers. Almost no South African-specific literature or research was found concerning the effect of working with HIV/AIDS on carers. However, due to the fact that many of the findings of the international studies and literature appear to be at least in partial agreement on the effect that HIV/AIDS has on carers, these findings are considered to be a relevant premise from which to examine the South African context too.

### ***Impact of HIV/AIDS Care on Carers***

There are many aspects of helping professions, such as close interaction with clients, excessive time pressures and client demands and so on, which render the professionals susceptible to burnout (Bellani et al., 1996). However, there seems to be a significant amount of literature that leads to the impression that working with HIV/AIDS is different from other helping or health care scenarios. As Beckerman and Rock (1996) comment, research on people working with HIV/AIDS has highlighted the unique nature of stressors, rewards and challenges associated with this type of work.

### *The negative impact of HIV/AIDS on carers*

Scott and Hilliard (1992, as cited in Bellani et al., 1996) state that caring for HIV/AIDS patients is both emotionally and physically difficult for health care workers, and according to Bennett et al. (1993, as cited in Bellani et al.) and Strathdee et al. (1994, as cited in Bellani et al.), burnout is more prevalent and severe for carers in the HIV/AIDS field than in other health fields.

There are a number of characteristics of HIV/AIDS care that have been found to have a negative impact on carers. Some of these characteristics are as follows: secondary stigmatisation (Van Dis & Van Dongen, 1993 as cited in Miller, 2000); identification and emotional involvement with patients (Gueritaul-Chalvin et al., 2000; Van Dis & Van Dongen, 1993 as cited in Miller, 2000); absence of a cure and thus unavoidable fatality (Bennett et al., 1991; Van Dis & Van Dongen, 1993 as cited in Miller, 2000) and therefore feelings associated with attachment and loss (Taeerk, 1993, as cited in Bellani et al., 1996); loss, grief, helplessness and ineffectiveness related to feelings of inadequacy of skills to care for HIV/AIDS infected people (multiple sources as cited in Bellani et al.); exposure to death and dying (multiple sources as cited in Bellani et al.; Sherr, 1989; Van Dis & Van Dongen, 1993 as cited in Miller, 2000); intensity of the epidemic and the prevalence of infection (Van Dis & Van Dongen, 1993 as cited in Miller, 2000); and fears of contagion through occupational exposure (multiple sources as cited in Bellani et al.; Gueritaul-Chalvin et al., 2000; Battegay et al., 1991; Van Dis & Van Dongen, 1993 as cited in Miller, 2000; Visintini et al., 1996)

An additional stressor that emerges from the literature, of particular importance to this study, is the young age of HIV/AIDS patients (Battegay et al., 1991; Bennett et al., 1991; Gueritaul-Chalvin et al., 2000). Ross and Seeger (1988, as cited in Gueritault-Chalvin et al., 2000) found that professionals who were concerned about the young age of their patients were more likely to report higher levels of burnout than their counterparts who expressed no such concern. Further attention to the impact of working with dying children is necessitated by the particular context of this research.

### ***Dealing With the Death of Children.***

From the happiness of a cured or healthier child to the suffering of dying, nurses caring for chronically ill children may have a range of experiences (Emery, 1993, as cited in Bulley, 2000), but Bond (1994, as cited in Bulley, 2000) concludes that while nursing in general is a stressful field of work, it is especially so when caring for dying children. Similarly, according to Emery (1993, as cited in Bulley, 2000, p. 153), “Working with children who face a life-threatening disease requiring long intensive treatments can be stressful especially when the outcome can never be predicted or guaranteed”.

A century ago, child mortality rates were much higher and therefore childhood death frequently assumed, but technological and medical advancement have led to increased life expectancy, leading to childhood death being experienced as something terrible and out-of-the-ordinary (Ulla et al., 2003). In fact, Ulla et al.’s study found that of people’s attitudes towards their life and death, the highest concerns were for dying young and suffering unbearable pain.

Clark and Seymour (1999) note that today, the essential condition of dying is that death is often protracted and anticipated and that it comes at the end of a long life; and this type of death falls into the category of gradual death. Other categories of death are catastrophic and premature death (Clark & Seymour, 1999). Premature death is considered to be that which takes place before a person has a chance to experience a typical human life cycle, although this is obviously then linked to culture and context (Callahan & Hanson, 1999), and Clark and Seymour (1999) list death due to HIV/AIDS as premature death. While the aim of medicine is not to provide immortality (Carne, 1993, as cited in Ulla et al., 2003) and while not all death can or should be considered as premature, the duty of medicine and health care systems in general, should be to help the young become old (Callahan & Hanson, 1999). It is Callahan and Hanson’s (1999) opinion that in the struggle against death, the primary aim of medicine should be to reduce premature death. Clearly, the combination of the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in South African children, and the briefly mentioned resource constraints in South Africa, make this aim virtually unattainable.



HIV infection in children has been identified as one of the most challenging concerns facing health care workers and professionals (Armistead & Forehand, 1995 & Borkowsky, 1998, both cited in Steele et al., 2001). Lesar, Gerber and Semmel (1995) note that HIV infection in children presents medical, psychological and financial demands that are extraordinary. They also state that paediatric HIV infection is a condition that threatens not only the child, but the child's entire caregiving system.

### ***Positive Aspects Associated with HIV/AIDS Care***

Bateman (2001) notes that while previously psychiatrists and anaesthetists were particularly prone to having their wellbeing negatively affected by the nature and conditions of their work, the onslaught of the AIDS epidemic is likely to lead to increased numbers of South African medical practitioners, working with HIV/AIDS, being negatively impacted by their work. Nevertheless, working with HIV/AIDS is not all negative.

On the positive side, despite a plethora of literature that highlights the impact of working with HIV/AIDS on stress and burnout, Horstmann and McKusick (1986, as cited in Bennett et al., 1996 and in Bellani et al., 1996) found that physicians working with HIV/AIDS were intellectually stimulated by their work and enjoyed greater career satisfaction as a result. A study by Jetter et al., (1997) found that AIDS care providers felt a high commitment to their patients which in turn was thought to lessen the stresses associated with AIDS care. Brennan (1988, as cited in Bennett et al.) found that HIV/AIDS was perceived as a positive challenge, and Bennett (1992, as cited in Bennett et al.) found that carers felt they could learn a lot from the patients and benefit from their friendship with them. A study by Gusy et al. (1992) found that regular exposure to death and dying did not cause burnout but led to increased personal growth and meaningfulness of work.

### ***Factors Influencing Preparation and Coping***

There appears to be a lack of research and literature on paediatric HIV/AIDS care (apart from that which is from a medical perspective) and therefore while most of the

research and literature reviewed in this section is not specifically about children, it is still useful to consider.

Backer et al., (1982) note that teaching nurses about caring for dying patients is complex because each situation is different due to the uniqueness of both the patient and the student. Similarly, with regards to working with chronically ill or dying children, Bulley (2000) notes that individuals perceive the causes and effects of stress in different ways.

While Bellani et al. (1996) found that both individual characteristics and situational factors can contribute towards burnout, Ross and Seeger (1988, as cited in Bellani et al.) found that situational factors had more of an influence on stress and burnout in AIDS carers than personality factors. Kleiber et al. (1993, as cited in Bellani et al.) and Maslach and Jackson (1981, as cited in Claxton, Catalan & Burgess, 1998) found that institutional factors were responsible for burnout when working with HIV/AIDS.

Individual characteristics such as perceiving one's role to be rewarding (Bennett et al., 1996 as cited in Claxton et al., 1998), individual coping style (Bennett & Kelaher, 1994 and Martin, 1990, as cited in Claxton et al.), having an empathetic relationship with PWHA (Visintini et al., 1996 as cited in Claxton et al.), motivation (Calvert et al., 1991, as cited in Claxton et al., 1998), and personality (Bellani et al.) are all important factors that may influence the impact that HIV/AIDS has on carers.

This discussion has clearly identified that there are a variety of factors that contribute towards making working with HIV/AIDS either stressful or rewarding. This variety highlights how complex it would be to prepare carers for dealing with death due to HIV/AIDS, as preparation and coping are largely determined by context and by individual factors. However, there are some factors that can be identified from the literature as having an influence on preparation and coping.

#### ***Academic preparation and self-knowledge.***

Ross (1978, as cited in Backer et al., 1982) found that the exploration and awareness of one's personal concerns about death and dying led professionals to be more helpful

when treating dying patients. Furthermore, Lester et al., (1974, as cited in Backer et al.) found that in general, fears of death and dying decreased when academic preparation increased. In a study on the effects of HIV and AIDS on staff providing care, Sherr (1989) found that those who experienced the least stress were those who had attended educational courses, as opposed to those who experienced high stress before utilising crisis interventions.

#### ***Carer age and experience.***

Studies such as those of Bellani et al. (1996) and Claxton et al. (1998) found that HIV/AIDS carers of younger ages were more prone to burnout and therefore significantly more likely to experience it, due to a lack of experience. These findings are supported by Silverman (1993, as cited in Bellani et al.), Bellani et al., Bennett et al. (1991) and Gueritaul-Chalvin et al. (2000), who found that older age lessened burnout, and by Cronin-Stubbs and Brophy (1985, as cited in Bellani et al.), who found that experience lessened burnout.

#### ***Time working with HIV/AIDS and other work characteristics.***

Bellani et al. (1996) found that length of time working in HIV units did not increase vulnerability towards burnout, however, this finding is contradicted by Silverman (1993, as cited in Bellani et al.) and Bennett et al. (1991), who found that a long time in a particular unit increased vulnerability towards burnout.

Halprin and Hawkins (1992) found that having break time away from AIDS environments and having regular time to spend on non-AIDS-related activities were means to preventing or dealing with burnout. Other work characteristics that Halprin and Hawkins (1992) identified as having an impact on preventing or improving burnout were having varied tasks and flexible working times.

#### ***Social support.***

Robinson (1974, as cited in Backer et al., 1982) states that when professionals experience the pain of caring for dying patients, help and support may assist them to

realize that while painful, the experience can make them more compassionate and humane.

Halprin and Hawkins (1992) found that mechanisms to prevent or ameliorate burnout included having access to professional counseling, supervisory support and having a personal support system. This type of support provides an effective environment for the expression and sharing of personal-, work-, HIV/AIDS-, and death/dying-related feelings, which have been cited in some studies as a way to meet the psychological needs of HIV/AIDS carers (Bellani et al., 1996; de Guzman, Resurreccion, Cabal, Castro and Fleras, 1996). Support is also vital because health care professionals may also need to grieve when a patient dies (Backer et al., 1982).

Cooke (1992), Flaskerud (1987, as cited in Bennett et al., 1991), Koeske and Koeske (1989) and Nesbitt, Ross, Sunderland and Shelp (1996) all found that social support is effective for dealing with the emotional responses of HIV/AIDS care-related stress, while Guinan, McCallum, Painter, Dykes & Gold (1991) found that volunteering in the field of HIV/AIDS was experienced as rewarding if support was available to the volunteers and utilised by them, although they do note that finding volunteering rewarding does not mean that the experience is not stressful. Brettler and Dinoi (1991) found group processes or interventions to be effective, in that ongoing supportive networks were created through verbally sharing experiences and members benefited from sharing individual coping styles.

### ***The role of beliefs and attitudes.***

Clark and Seymour (1999) note that death is not something that most people, in many societies, have to deal with on a day-to-day basis. However, given the current statistics of HIV/AIDS infections in South Africa, death is something that people involved in HIV/AIDS care have to deal with frequently, and often on a day-to-day basis.

Horsburgh, Trenholme and Huckle (2002) state that the importance of understanding religious values, beliefs and customs cannot be underestimated in palliative care, as they have an influence on how terminal illness, disease processes and death are

perceived and approached. Attitudes also influence how people respond to death. For example, ritual norms differ, and intense outpourings of emotion in response to death are acceptable in some cultures, whereas other cultures promote emotional self-restraint (Backer et al., 1982). Different cultures also have different attitudes towards death, and these can be partly reflected by beliefs regarding what happens after death, for example, an important factor in an individual's acceptance of death could be a belief in the continuance of life after death (Backer et al.).

The management of death is possibly one of the most demanding aspects of health care, because the health care provider is forced to recognize the limits of science and medicine and accept their patient's imminent death (Callahan & Hanson, 1999). Despite this, caregivers of PWHAs are often encouraged to move quickly through the grief process, with advice to 'let go' and justifications that the patient's death may be a better option than to continue suffering (Walker et al., 1996). Reasons for this type of advice could be that some people truly believe that it would be better for a patient to die than suffer, and also because beliefs of eternal life after death may be viewed as a more desirable option than suffering on earth.

### *Summation*

Care and caring in general, as well as care and caring for the terminally ill, the impact of HIV/AIDS on carers, and dealing with chronically or terminally ill children are all vast topics for examination and discussion. The intention has been to discuss some of the areas of relevance for the context of the work that the participants of this study are involved in, as it was shown in the previous chapter that the MOW is highly contextual. Particular emphasis on the context of working with the terminally ill was necessary because it is likely that this will have a significant impact on the participants' work experiences and sources of meaning.

While ultimate responsibility for finding meaning may remain with the individual, contextual implications for meaning should still be considered by organisations and organisational psychologists, due to their far-reaching impact on the work experience and because, as it has been shown, the organisational context and the context of the

work done in organisations can have a significant impact on the meaning that people derive from their work.

During this substantial review of the literature, the factors likely to influence the MOW in the chosen organisation have emerged. At this stage, it is expected that the MOW will be largely influenced by context, relating to individual factors, organisational factors, and broader factors such as the South African context of HIV/AIDS, unemployment, and scarce resources. It is also expected that significant differences between this research and the published MOW research will emerge. First because of the differences between the South African context and the developed countries in which much of the MOW research has been conducted; and secondly, because the chosen organisation is not profit-oriented and most published MOW research is based on understandings that work and money are inseparable. These ideas will be explored in the practical study, and in order to get useful results, it is necessary to examine how such a study should be conducted.

## Chapter Four

### Designing a Study to Determine the MOW

Nosow and Form (1962) propose various ways in which the MOW can be studied. For example, through an historical analysis tracing changes in the meanings of work, or by comparing work to other phenomena such as leisure and unemployment (Nosow & Form, 1962). Although these may be valuable methods, there are however some problems. For example, a study of historical changes in meanings is reliant on secondary sources of information (Nosow & Form, 1962). Furthermore, people may not be able to verbalise what they like or dislike about their work, because people are often only able to identify what work means to them when they are no longer experiencing it (Nosow & Form, 1962), which is an idea similar to what Fox (1980) proposes, namely, that it is difficult to determine to what extent certain meanings are significant to the individual because of the difference between manifest and latent meanings. Latent meanings are an issue because one remains generally unaware of them until deprivation of that aspect is experienced, and therefore an individual cannot report these aspects as meaningful (Fox, 1980). One can imagine this in the case of unemployment – what an individual experienced as meaningful when involved in work may very likely be different to that which is considered to be meaningful when unemployed.

These difficulties, among others, mean that despite considerable interest in the ‘meaning of work’, there is of yet no well-articulated theory on the topic (Snir & Harpaz, 2002). Therefore it was necessary to draw on existing literature and research for guidance on how determining the MOW in this study should be approached. The elements discussed in this section form the basis for the line of inquiry in this research.

### *Decisions Based on the Literature*

As made clear in Chapter Two, there are many different definitions of work, and because of this, Drenth (1991, as cited in Kanungo, 1991) asserts that researchers need to put definitional boundaries on the concept of work. However, no such definitional boundaries were enforced on the concept of work in this research, the reason being as follows. No matter how widely ideas are drawn from available literature, if a researcher enforces definitional boundaries on the concept of work it will be inevitable that the researcher's own understandings, values, beliefs and expectations of work will influence the way that work is defined. This in turn will undoubtedly influence the way research participants view the concept of work and therefore their responses to the research questions. The aim of this research was to explore, in detail, the participants' understandings of work and how their work brings meaning to their lives. A bounded definition of work would have limited the experiences that participants expressed. For example, to consider work as only paid employment would prevent a participant from describing work experiences that fall outside the bounds of paid employment. As Fineman (1991) states, to subject participants to describing their work experiences according to a researcher's constructs negates the intention to capture the participant's own meanings.

The decision to frame questions in such a way that context and the macro-perspective were considered was made after consideration of three main points. A pioneering MOW project was carried out in eight countries by the MOW-IRT in 1981 and 1987, and it is the most comprehensive and broad study to be conducted on the MOW. The value of this research for any additional research into the MOW was thus recognised. As it was based on a heuristic model in which the meaning of working was understood to be determined by individual choices and experiences, as well as by the environmental and organisational context in which individual's live and work (MOW-IRT, 1981 & 1987), the decision to consider the macro-context was made. This decision was reinforced by two additional points, namely Brief and Nord's (1990a) advice that work attitudes and behaviours should not only be examined within the boundaries of the workplace but should consider the macro-perspective, and because this research is essentially about exploring the MOW in a new context, the impact of context on the MOW had already been accepted by the researcher.



Due to the scope and the accepted value of the research conducted by the MOW-IRT, their findings were used as a basis for the questions used for exploring the MOW in this study, and therefore their model requires further examination. The model depicts the MOW in terms of six major dimensions:

*Work centrality* “refers to the degree of general importance that work has in one’s life at any given time” (MOW-IRT, 1987, as cited in Snir & Harpaz, p. 182) and it has been positively related to organisational variables such as job satisfaction (Kanungo, 1982, as cited in Snir & Harpaz, 2002) and longer job tenure (Dubin et al., 1975, as cited in Snir & Harpaz, 2002). In fact, Dubin (1956, as cited in Lorence & Mortimer, 1981) considers work to be a central life interest to such an extent that he proposes that workers prefer work-related activities to activities in non-work contexts.

*Economic orientation* refers to an individual’s tendency to be motivated to work by instrumental or extrinsic outcomes (Snir & Harpaz, 2002). This has been supported by studies such as Dubin et al.’s. (1975, as cited in Snir & Harpaz, 2001) and Kanungo and Mendonca’s (1992, as cited in Snir & Harpaz, 2002). This dimension is significant in the way all people define work, according to the patterns determined by England and Harpaz (1990) and England and Whitely (1990), as discussed in the review of literature regarding work definitions. This is testament to the prevalence of opinions that work equals paid employment.

The *entitlement norm* relates to the underlying right of the individual and “the work-related responsibilities of society and organisations to all individuals” (Snir & Harpaz, 2002, p. 184), that is, people are entitled to work if they so desire. The entitlement norm is based on the view of individuals as being equal, autonomous social actors (Schwartz, 1999). This aspect will be interesting to consider in a South African study of the MOW, where equality has been, and still is, a significant issue especially in the world of work and legislation pertaining to the workplace. Given South Africa’s unemployment rates, it will also be interesting to see whether people think they are entitled to work, or not. This dimension corresponds with the way pattern A people define work, according to England and Harpaz (1990) and England and Whitely (1990).

The *obligation norm* relates to the duty of individuals to contribute to organisations and society through working (England & Whitely, 1990; Schwartz, 1999; Snir & Harpaz, 2002) and is based on the view of the individual as an integral part of a collective (Schwartz, 1999). The notion of duty stems from the Protestant work ethic (Randall & Cote, 1991, as cited in Snir & Harpaz, 2002), which emphasises the moral ideal of hard work and views work as a calling through which religious behaviour can be projected into the everyday world (Bell, 1997, as cited in Wolfe, 1997). According to England and Harpaz's (1990) and England and Whitely's (1990) work definitions, this dimension is reflected in patterns B, C and D.

Pattern B also corresponds with the dimension of *interpersonal relations*, which are considered as essential for mental health (McAdams, 1988, as cited in Snir & Harpaz, 2002). Kaplan and Tausky (1974, as cited in Snir & Harpaz, 2002) found that interactions experienced in the workplace play a prominent role in satisfying interpersonal relationship needs. Wuthnow (1996, as cited in Wolfe, 1997) found in his study that participants did not see chains of command and isolation when they looked at the workplace, rather they saw an environment where other people's lives had become important to their own. Similarly, in a study by Hochschild (1997, as cited in Wolfe, 1997), workplaces were viewed as arenas where people can make friends and learn about themselves.

*Intrinsic orientation* refers to placing value on work variables such as having interesting and challenging work, autonomy, and variety, (Snir & Harpaz, 2002) and it emphasises individual needs (Deci & Ryan, 1985, as cited in Snir & Harpaz, 2002). According to Kelly and Kelly (1994) considerable research has found that work holds intrinsic as well as extrinsic meaning. Of England and Harpaz's (1990) and England and Whitely's (1990) patterns of definitions, only one corresponds with this dimension, namely pattern A.

A crucial aspect of the study conducted by the MOW-IRT was the recognition that work meanings are part of a developmental process, in that a variety of experiences lead to expressive and instrumental meanings about working; further experiences lead

to revised or reaffirmed meanings of working; and so on as diverse experiences cause meanings to be re-evaluated and revised (MOW-IRT, 1981). Similarly, Schneider (1990, p. xi) states that “the MOW is a variable not an absolute both for individuals and societies over time”, and Brief and Nord (1990b) note that the MOW is developmental, influenced by one’s perceptions of the past, present and future. Locke and Taylor (1990) also explain that individuals begin work with certain values that both affect and are affected by work experiences that are either within or outside the individual’s control (Locke & Taylor, 1990). The idea that the MOW develops over time was recognised as an important characteristic of the MOW and questions aimed at uncovering this characteristic were incorporated into this study.

Ruiz Quintanilla (1991) discusses four components of the MOW, namely *work centrality*, *societal norms about working*, *work goals* and *work definitions*, which are, in general, quite similar to the dimensions determined by the MOW-IRT. The use of the MOW-IRT’s dimensions in this research therefore incorporates Ruiz Quintanilla’s dimensions. However, the *work definitions* component differs quite significantly from the six dimensions and was considered to be crucial for a study on the MOW. It encompasses rationales and reasons for engaging in work, personal outcomes/states resulting from working, and constraints/controls related to engaging in work, an examination of which was considered as useful for determining why people are involved in this work, the impact that it has on them, and therefore the meaning that they derive from their work.

It is interesting to note Ciulla’s (2000) proposition that in order to determine what is meaningful to people they should be asked what they are willing to give up from their work. This idea reflects Schein’s (1990) idea of the career anchor, which is the one thing that a person would not give up if forced to choose. Conversely, by asking how work is being experienced in reality and how one imagines it could be experienced ideally, one can determine what is lacking (Fox, 1980) and subsequently what is considered to be meaningful. It was thought that utilisation of these ideas would be effective in determining the characteristics of work that were considered to create/hold the most meaning, and this aspect was approached through eliciting explanations of people’s ideal jobs/work if money was not a factor.

According to Freidmann and Havighurst's (1962) discussion on the significance of the job, the meaning that work has for an individual is a combination of the individual's recognition of the part work has played in one's life and the affective responses one has had to it. Therefore in order to determine work meanings, the role of work and people's responses to it, in comparison to other important life roles were explored. The importance of work and other life roles was also explored because the MOW should be considered as integrated with other life areas, and studied as such due to the fact that one of the biggest difficulties in studying the MOW is that it is difficult to separate the meaning that work holds for people from the meaning their lives hold (Brief & Nord, 1990a).

Throughout the review of the literature so far, certain characteristics that make determining the MOW difficult, have emerged. For example, the variety of approaches to determining the MOW; the differences in how the work construct is understood and defined; the latency of MOW elements; and the fact that the MOW may have ingredients that are unique to each person. It is the researcher's opinion that because of these characteristics, a quantitative assessment would limit the scope of the dimensions of the MOW that could be identified. Therefore, the choice to utilise qualitative research methods was made.

### ***Using Qualitative Research Methods***

Marlow (1993, p. 66) notes that qualitative research "involves the nonnumerical examination of phenomena. It focuses on the underlying meanings and patterns of relationships". Similarly, according to King (1994) and Schutt (2004), qualitative research methods are most appropriate to use when the meaning that people attach to a concept is unclear, for while qualitative research does have a focus, it is broad in order for important meanings to be discovered (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Similarly, Bogdan and Biklen (1992) and Maykut and Morehouse (1994) note that 'meaning' is of primary concern to qualitative researchers and this concern involves ensuring that perspectives are accurately captured. The focus is often on what is experienced and what these experiences mean to the individual (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992), and the detail and processes required for uncovering these make qualitative methods most appropriate for use. As the intention of this research was to explore and

understand the meaning that work holds for people involved in caring for HIV/AIDS patients through examining their work experiences, this research has the exploration of meaning at its core, and therefore qualitative methods are appropriate.

If the aim of research is to understand the MOW for people in real life, they need to be studied in their context and contextual factors need to be considered, because as already been established in the review of the literature, context is of particular importance to the MOW. Furthermore, the way people behave, think and feel can often only be understood from their own frame of reference (Gillham, 2000), that is, from within their context or by bearing their own context in mind. Objective or quantitative research techniques may produce artefacts that are not true for the real life of the people concerned and although qualitative research does not ignore the objective, it is more interested in subjective experiences and phenomenological meaning within context (Gillham, 2000; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994).

In a particular reference to studying the MOW, Fineman (1991) comments that a study of work meanings is not aided by the use of traditional nomothetic techniques, and he notes Fox's (1980, as cited in Fineman, 1991) observation - that if surveys are to illuminate the complex and sometimes contradictory nature of the attitudes that people have about their work in general and their jobs in particular, they would have to be extremely carefully and imaginatively designed. Similarly, many qualitative researchers believe that prestructured methods may block one from seeing alternative ways of making sense of the data and may lead to a lack of flexibility to respond to emergent insights (Maxwell, 1996). On the one hand, nomothetic, structured approaches promote comparability of data across studies and researchers and are therefore appropriate for questions regarding difference or variance (Maxwell, 1996). On the other hand, unstructured approaches towards research are useful for understanding processes that led to certain outcomes, as they trade generalisability and comparability for contextual understanding (Maxwell, 1996), such as is necessary in a study such as this.

Deciding to what extent the methods should be prestructured is an important issue in qualitative research design (Maxwell, 1996). Miles and Huberman (1994) caution inexperienced researchers against using methods that are very loose or inductive, and

therefore, in terms of structure, this research sought to balance elements that were structured with unstructured ones, and this aspect will become evident during the explanation of the chosen data collection method in the next chapter, which details the methods employed in this research. Along with the examination of the data collection methods utilised in this research, the sampling methods utilised will also be examined in the next chapter, and these are two of the four components to qualitative research methods, according to Maxwell (1996). The other two components are the relationship between the researcher and the research participants and data analysis, referring to what is done to the information in order to make sense of it, and these two are more appropriate to discuss within this chapter.

### ***The Researcher-Participant Relationship***

Maxwell (1996, p. 66) states that the relationship between the researcher and research participants is a “complex and changing entity”, while Bakhtin (1986, as cited in Maykut & Morehouse, 1994) notes that if a research participant is to be understood as a person and not a thing, the relationship between the participant and the researcher needs to be dynamic and mutual. It is the researcher’s responsibility to create an atmosphere where the respondent will feel at ease (Burns, 1997) and part of creating this atmosphere entails explaining what the research is about.

While it is not possible to avoid one party affecting the other in this type of interchange (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983, as cited in Maxwell, 1996), the influence of the researcher on the individuals or setting being studied, known as reactivity, should be minimized (Maxwell, 1996). To ensure this, the researcher should, first, not provide the respondent with any information that may influence or bias the respondents, and secondly, the researcher should not influence the nature or content of any interchanges or responses by responding in either a favourable or non-favourable manner to what is said during the interaction (Burns, 1997). The desire of the researcher to be accepted by the respondent and vice versa, is a factor that may have an effect on the interaction between the parties, as well as age, race, cultural difference and gender (Burns, 1997). These were all issues that warranted consideration, in order that they did not adversely impact the research process, nor the quality of the data collected, and due care was taken that this did not

occur. By forming rapport with participants, a comfortable environment was created. This prevented participants from feeling the need to impress the researcher, and the quality of the interview from being affected by differences in age, race, culture or gender. While it had been anticipated that sources of individual difference, such as age, race and gender, may have an impact on the interview process, this was not found to be the case.

According to Maxwell (1996), decisions need to be made regarding the kind of relationship the researcher wants with the participants. These types of decisions must be suitable for each study and are therefore best made with the specific research context in mind (Maxwell, 1996). The decisions made in this regard will not be covered here but in the next chapter, and so this examination moves on to present the data analysis methods used.

### ***Qualitative Data Analysis***

Data analysis involves the systematic arrangement of research materials so that the researcher may gain an increased understanding which is necessary for the eventual presentation of research discoveries (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). It is possibly, according to Maykut and Morehouse (1994), the heart of qualitative research and it is the one area in which qualitative and quantitative research differ the most.

The aim is to present the text in ways that capture the essence of the people and settings from which the data is derived (Schutt, 2004), without stripping the experiences of their meaning (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Qualitative data analysis is inductive, that is, categories, patterns and relationships in the data are identified through a process of discovery (Schutt, 2004). The following discussion covers the two approaches on which the analysis of this research was based.

#### ***Miles and Huberman's Framework for Qualitative Data Analysis.***

Miles and Huberman's framework for qualitative data analysis aims to identify relationships between phenomena through the three stages of data reduction, data display and drawing and verifying conclusions (Punch, 1998).

The first stage, data reduction, involves editing, segmenting and summarizing the data in order to find themes, clusters and patterns that can be coded for analysis, conceptualization, and explanation (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Punch, 1998). The data display process, the second stage, aims to compress, organize and assemble the information that was gathered during reduction (Punch, 1998). Displays, whether in the form of graphs, networks or diagrams, are useful as they show the stage of analysis reached and form the basis for further analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Punch, 1998).

Data reduction and display are mainly concerned with coding and memoing (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Coding involves labelling or assigning names to categories of data, thus giving meaning to the data category (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Punch, 1998). Codes can either be specified, or the researcher can let the data suggest the initial codes, and codes can also be descriptive or inferential (Punch, 1998), depending on the aims of the analysis. Data reduction and display also include the process of memoing, which involves recording or noting ideas about the codes and data, in order to link the codes with the development of propositions (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Punch, 1998).

The third stage of Miles and Huberman's framework involves developing propositions for drawing and verifying conclusions and meaning from the now reduced and displayed data, in order to integrate what has taken place in the previous stages and to produce a meaningful and coherent picture of the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Punch, 1998). While Miles and Huberman provide guidelines on the process to be followed and what actions should take place during each step, Bogdan and Biklen's method of analysis tends to focus more on how to code, categorise and sort the data.

### ***Bogdan and Biklen's Approach to Analysis.***

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) propose that certain words, events, phrases or patterns may begin to emerge as the data is read over and reviewed. Words or codes that represent these topics or patterns should be recorded and these become coding categories - they



are a means of sorting the collected qualitative data (Bodgan & Biklen, 1992). While some potential coding categories may emerge during the collection phases and others during analysis, the development of coding categories is a crucial step in the analysis process (Bodgan & Biklen, 1992). They have developed a list of coding families that do not represent universally defined coding conventions, but which they hope will help researchers understand what codes are; present some ideas for coding possibilities; and provide some tools for the development of coding categories. The coding families are not an exhaustive list of categories, and it is important to remember that a unit of data may be coded by more than one coding category within more than one coding family (Bodgan & Biklen, 1992). It is not feasible to go through each family in detail and therefore only a brief description of each family is presented here.

*Setting / context codes* refer to codes under which general information regarding setting, subject or topic could be sorted.

*Definition of situation codes* refers to the codes under which you could classify units of data that tell how participants define the setting or certain topics.

*Perspective held by subjects* is the code name used to denote how participants think of all, or some subjects, that are not as general as their overall definition but that indicate orientations towards certain aspects.

*Subjects' way of thinking about people and objects* is the family used to refer to codes that represent how participants think of others, of outsiders, or of objects that are in their world.

*Process codes* refer to those that facilitate categorizing sequences of events, patterns of change, or changes over time.

*Activity codes* is the family that encompasses codes referring to behaviour/s that occurs regularly.

*Event codes* is the family that encompasses codes related to certain activities occurring in the lives or setting of the participants.

*Strategy codes* are those that can be used to classify the tactics, techniques and other conscious ways that people use to achieve various things.

*Relationship and social structure codes* refers to the family that includes codes indicating relationships or patterns of behaviour among people specified by

organisational charts, that is, data that highlights cliques, friendships, enemies and so on or more formalized relations such as roles, sets or positions.

*Methods codes* is the family of codes under which material relating to the procedures or problems of research can be classified.

*Preassigned coding systems* refer to those codes determined before the data is collected.

Bodgan and Biklen (1992) note that their categories merely provide ideas of what to look for and where, and they are careful not to imply that analysis is only a product of this, but also of the perspectives of the researcher. Different social values, ways of making sense of the world, and both personal and theoretical perspectives influence what materials researchers choose to code and the sense they make out of the data (Bodgan & Biklen, 1992).

Bodgan and Biklen (1992) provide three examples of ways in which the data can be mechanically sorted, however none were felt to be appropriate for the size of the data set and the goals of this research.

### ***Summation***

Gillham (2000, p. 25) notes that the purpose of analysis is to “faithfully reflect in summary and organized form” the evidence that has been found. The emphasis on faithful reflection in this explanation of analysis introduces the fact that for analysis to be a success, the method used needs to be appropriate for the type of data collected and the purpose of the research Punch (1998). This discussion has revealed why qualitative analysis methods are appropriate for research into the MOW.

The purpose of reviewing all this literature was to ensure that the questions to be designed comprehensively cover the topic. This chapter, the last of three reviewing the literature, was concerned with theoretical understandings of how the MOW and working can be determined. The examination of these elements forms a basis for the practical investigation presented in the next chapter.

## Chapter Five

### Research Method for This Study

The purpose of this chapter is to detail the methods used in this research. Providing this type of information is a crucial aspect of the research process, because historically, most qualitative researchers have not sufficiently illustrated their rigour with regards to method, resulting in beliefs that qualitative research is largely intuitive and not part of good science (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). Qualitative research is, in fact, largely intuitive and there is no recipe for doing it, so that “the appropriate answer to almost any question about the use of qualitative methods is ‘it depends’” (Maxwell, 1996, p. 63). However, these characteristics do not necessarily equate to poor science - a rigorous approach towards the research and the use of appropriate methods will eliminate the potential negativities of using intuition in research.

The preceding chapter has already described the basis for choosing qualitative research methods. This chapter outlines the specifics of the method in terms of design, sampling, methods of data collection, and how the data was analysed. The chapter concludes by examining some method-related concerns and limitations and some of the particular areas of concern for this study.

#### *Design*

Qualitative research is often largely descriptive because everything is viewed as having the potential to produce a more in-depth understanding of what is being studied, and no details are disregarded (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). This study is, however, a mixture of descriptive and exploratory. It is descriptive in that existing theory and data collection methods were used to guide it and it has only been described from the perspective of one researcher as opposed to a team, and

exploratory in that it has aimed to gain insight into a phenomenon and used people's words and meaning as the data that was analysed (Bogdan & Biklen, 1999; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; Scholz & Tietje, 2002).

This research has a nonemergent design, because data was collected and then analysed (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994), and the reason for this will be explained further in the section on how the analysis of data was conducted. However, the design of this research also has emergent elements, because the research evolved over time and the scope of the research was broadened or narrowed depending on what arose (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994).

### ***Approach Towards Relationships***

The people being studied were viewed and approached as participants in the research process, as opposed to research subjects. The reason for this is that, in qualitative research, the relationship between the researcher and the people being researched is part of the research process and those being researched are participants who actively shape the course of the data collection process (King, 1994).

However, the decision not to get too involved in the organisation or too close to the participants was also made, for the reason that the researcher needed to withdraw from the organisation after the completion of the research process and did not want to leave a gap after withdrawing. Before any relationships were formed with potential participants, decisions regarding how participants were to be selected needed to be made, and these decisions had to do with sampling.

### ***Sampling***

As this research is focused on understanding the meaning of a specific type and nature of work, only those involved in this type of work were suitable for the sample. Therefore, purposive sampling was used, as this type of sampling seeks to include those elements that are of interest to the researcher (Marlow, 1993) and only those involved in such work within the chosen organisation were considered for the sample. This rationale fits with Maxwell's (1996) observation, which is that sampling within

qualitative research often falls within the category of purposive sampling, as it is a strategy through which particular settings, people or events are deliberately selected from which to gather information. While purposive sampling may limit the potential for generalisability (Marlow, 1993), it was the most appropriate form to use in this research.

In this study, the selection of participants was generally done on a random basis, but at times it was more purposeful. When the research was explained to members of the organisation, those who were interested and willing to partake in the research did so. However, efforts were also made to include certain people, in order for there to be a mixed sample in terms of race and gender, and in order for the sample to be comprised of participants involved in different aspects of the work, such as medical personnel, informal carers, managerial and administrative staff. This approach to the sampling was necessary in order to gain an overall view of what work means for the people working within this organisation, and not just what it means for certain people or groups. The approach was similar to that of Starnes (1990, as cited in Maxwell, 1996), who used randomised sampling within the group that she was studying in order to avoid perceptions of favouritism regarding interviewee selection, but who altered the random selection process in order to include a point of view which may otherwise not have been represented.

This research had a sample size of 12, and due to the sampling methods utilised, was felt to be representative of the people working in the organisation. The sample was assembled by approaching members of the organisation, by explaining general aspects about the research and by asking whether they would help in the research process by being interviewed, as this was the chosen method of data collection. Table 1 describes the research sample.

<b>Gender:</b>	Females	11
	Males	1
<b>Race:</b>	Black	5
	White	7
<b>Tenure:</b>	Range	2 weeks – 3 years
	Average	16.5 months
<b>How many participants had children of their own)</b>		9

Table 1. Description of research sample

***Data Collection: Interviewing***

Maxwell (1996) notes that while research methods are the means by which to answer research questions, there is no logical or mechanical way through which to convert research questions into methods. Furthermore, he notes that the selection of research methods depends on both the research questions and the actual situation – the researcher should select the methods that will work most effectively in the particular situation, in order to provide the required data.

According to Stake (2000), one of the most effective means of increasing understanding is to illuminate, through words, the natural experiences acquired through personal involvement, and interviews are a data collection method that allows the researcher to become personally involved in the research process. Furthermore, King (1994) notes that interviews are the most commonly used qualitative research method in organisational research, because they are highly flexible, capable of producing data of great depth, and can be used almost anywhere. Thus the data collection method considered to be most appropriate in this research was interviewing.

***Interview Structure***

The structure of the interview primarily relates to the extent to which the interview questions have been arranged prior to conducting the interview (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Unstructured interviews have a focus and purpose, but the technique employed is to ask a few relevant questions to open the conversation, and

then to listen carefully to answers to determine whether further probing is necessary or for clues to what questions to ask next (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). On the other hand, the purpose of structured interviews is to ask and receive answers to predetermined questions (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). However, there is a type of interview that falls between these two methods in terms of structure, namely the semi-structured interview (Schutt, 2004) or the interview guide (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994) and this was the type of interview chosen for use in this research.

This type of interview allowed the interviewer to use a series of broad questions but also allowed for the freedom to explore, probe and clarify information or correct any misunderstanding that arises in the course of the interview (Kvale, 1996; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). This ability to probe, clarify and correct misunderstandings is one of the main advantages of interviews (Burns, 1997; Judd et al., 1991; Schutt, 2004). Table 2 is an example of the broad questions that the researcher planned to ask in the interviews, with examples of possible points to use as probes or ideas to look out for which may have required clarification. The full interview schedule is enclosed in Appendix A.

<p><b>Theme: working with children</b></p> <p>[May or may not have mentioned working with children as part of their answers to questions 3.1-3.3]</p> <p>Question 4: Your work here is focused on children. Please tell me about your experiences of working with children.</p> <p><u>Possible prompts:</u></p> <p>How does it make you feel?</p> <p>What motivates you to work with children?</p> <p>Do you have children of your own and if so, does working with children have an effect on how you parent your own children?</p>
--

Table 2. Example of an interview question with possible prompts

The semi-structured interview allows the researcher to vary question content and order (Schutt, 2004), depending on the participant. Although question variation may affect standardization and possible replication, the ultimate goal of this research was to gain an in-depth understanding of the topic and not to conduct a replicable test, and therefore varying question order and content was a necessary response to the variable

depth to which the participants had previously considered, or not considered, the area of discussion.

The use of semi-structured interviews did not, however, negate the use of in-depth interviews, and this facet of interviewing will be considered next.

### ***In-depth Interviews***

Interviewing can be understood as a purposeful and specialised form of knowledge acquisition, intended for the gathering of specific information for a specific reason, via human interaction and dialogue (Downs, Smeyak & Martin, 1980; Kvale, 1996; Morgan, 1988, as cited in Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). The term 'in-depth' refers to those interviews that aim to expose thoughts and feelings that may lie beneath the surface of a topic (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994).

Interviews attempt to examine the internal realities of the research subjects by asking for "people's own accounts of their behaviour, because [these accounts] are assumed to reveal the rules people follow and thus the meaning of the action in question" (Alasuutari, 1998, p. 142). Interviews are joint products of what the researcher and participant talk about and how they do this (Mishler, 1986, as cited in Maykut & Morehouse, 1994), and being face-to-face is a feature of interviewing which aids in the quality of this jointly-produced product. This is because being face-to-face aids the creation of rapport (Burns, 1997) and it is important to build rapport with the interviewee and ensure that the interviewee is at ease (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) and thus willing to speak openly and honestly.

While non-verbal clues were not collected and analysed, being face-to-face with the participant meant that the researcher could observe non-verbal clues, such as facial expressions or whether the respondent was experiencing discomfort (Burns, 1997). The researcher was able to draw on her interpersonal skills and her previous experience of using interviews as a data collection mode, in order to create an environment and state in which the desired information could be effectively elicited.



By using in-depth, face-to-face interviews, the researcher could monitor the response rate, as opposed to what happens in methods that require written responses (Burns, 1997; Judd, Smith & Kidder, 1991). The researcher also had the advantage of being able to control the context of the interview and the order of the questions thus preventing respondents from looking ahead and predicting trends in the inquiry (Burns, 1997; Judd et al., 1991).

Schutt (2004) suggests that open-ended questions are preferable in instances where a range of responses cannot adequately be anticipated. The nature of open-ended questions allows for the elicitation of unanticipated answers that may uncover previously unconsidered relationships of hypothesis (Burns, 1997). For these reasons, open-ended questions were often used. Both Table 2 (previously seen) and Table 3 illustrate the character of the open-ended questions used in this research.

5. The work you do here with the children also obviously centres around the fact that the children have HIV or AIDS and many of them are very sick. Please tell me about your experiences of working with terminally ill patients and how it makes you feel.
--

Table 3. Example of an open-ended question from the interview.

Maykut and Morehouse (1994) advise researchers that the questions asked determine the answers received and this was confirmed in this research. The use of open-ended questions definitely resulted in unanticipated answers, some of which were of extreme value to the research. Other instances, where participants had perhaps not considered some the issues before, the use of open-ended questions prevented the participants from being able to answer, in which case the researcher needed to use more specific, closed-ended questions to prompt an answer.

Open-ended questions provide a frame of reference for the respondent while allowing for flexibility of responses and minimal restraint on either the response content or the manner, thus allowing for rich and intense responses (Burns, 1997). This flexibility allowed the researcher to probe and clarify, which further enhanced the researcher’s expected ability to make the most truthful assessment of what the respondent believes (Burns, 1997). This is necessary, because unlike in quantitative research, where

methods can be controlled by measures of reliability and validity, the onus for making valid and reliable interpretations of the data rests on the researcher.

There are some additional aspects about interviews that are worth noting in regard to this research.

*Interview Aspects for Consideration*

The need to exercise caution when designing questions was recognised because it was realised that the participants were unlikely to be as familiar with the research theory as the researcher, and therefore unlikely to understand the relevant theoretical terms or jargon. The researcher avoided the use of questions that used colloquial or difficult to understand language or wording, as recommended by Alasuutari (1998). Appropriate terminology was used in order not to risk confusing the meaning of the questions (Burns, 1997).

When designing the questions for this research, special care was taken not to ask loaded questions that lead to certain answers, because the intention was to gather information that is unique to the individual being asked, and not to determine whether their thoughts, opinions or attitudes conform to those of others. Furthermore, this caution was exercised because as Burns (1997) notes, respondents may find it difficult to disagree with a researcher who seems to be suggesting that they answer in a particular way. Table 4 contains an example of a loaded question and the unloaded version that was utilised in this research.

<p><b>Loaded question:</b></p> <p>“Most people tend to think that it is a person’s duty to work as a way of contributing to society. Do you agree and why?”</p> <p><b>Unloaded question used in this study:</b></p> <p>“Do you think that people have a duty to work as a way of contributing to society, and could you please explain your answer for me?”</p>
---

Table 4. Example of a loaded and unloaded interview question

Gilligan (no date, as cited in Maxwell, 1996) suggests that rather than asking contrived questions, designed to elicit specific information, the researcher should ask real questions – ones to which the researcher is genuinely interested in hearing the answer. These real questions are likely to be more context-specific than the general research question that the research is seeking to understand (Maxwell, 1996), in order to tap into what is really going on and what is being experienced by the participants. All the questions that were asked in this research had direct relevance to the topic under examination. Furthermore, many of the questions were context-related, because as discussed both previously in this section and in the review of the literature, contextual factors are important to the topic under examination.

A primary concern in research that aims to gather information on beliefs and attitudes is that the individual may never have thought about the issue (Judd et al., 1991). It was accepted during the design stage of this research, that it may be difficult to ascertain what meaning work holds for the participants in this study because they may not have considered the issue before. Furthermore, attitudes and beliefs towards the meaning that work holds may vary in complexity, dimension and intensity (Judd et al.), for example, the fact that work provides an individual with a sense of belonging may differ between different jobs and different work environments.

Instead of trying to focus on participant's attitudes, the researcher had to try and elicit the meaning that work has for the participants through gaining an understanding of their experiences of work. By focusing on experiences, the interviews were open to the discovery of any relevant experience that a participant may have had, as opposed to only examining certain attitudes or beliefs.

### ***Additional Data Collection: The Use of Documents***

Being able to reflect on the collected data in relation to information gleaned from available documentation about the organisation, was found to be useful in terms of gaining a holistic understanding of the context and the individuals within the specific context. Although many of the documents available to the researcher were factual records and therefore selective, they were an important source of information (Nisbet, Watts & Youngman, 1982). While these types of documents are often viewed as

biased because they are written by the people involved, (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992), it is the views of the people involved that are of prime importance in this research. Public statements of mission and philosophy were of interest in this research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994), and as much of this is available on the internet, it is not information that is private or confidential.

Maxwell (1996) suggests that the qualitative researcher should begin to analyse their data immediately after their first interview or observation and to continue the analysis throughout the research process. Although written analysis was not made until after data collection was completed, the researcher began to formulate ideas for themes and patterns immediately after the completion of the first set of interviews. The next section provides more detail on the analysis process and the methods used.

### ***Data Analysis***

Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1992) note that qualitative data analysis is an ongoing process. According to Maxwell (1996), data analysis is also a design issue, because it must also be designed – decisions about how analysis is to be done need to be made, and these decisions should influence, and be influenced by, the rest of the research design. One of the decisions made regarding analysis in this research was that the interviews would be recorded so that they could be transcribed and the transcriptions used as material during the analysis.

### ***Recording and Transcription***

According to King (1994), despite the difficult and time-consuming nature of transcribing, there is no satisfactory alternative to recording and transcribing qualitative interviews. The advantage of using a tape recorder is that the researcher is free to participate in the dialogue without needing to concentrate on taking notes (Burns, 1997). It is essential that permission from each interviewee is gained before recording instruments are used, and that the interviewee is reassured of the confidentiality of the recordings (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Burns, 1997). In this research, the researcher ensured that each respondent was comfortable with being recorded, which is essential so that the way the respondent answers questions is not

inhibited (Burns, 1997). For the one interview to which the participant objected being recorded, short notes (which would later enhance the researcher's ability to remember what was said in more detail) were taken, and the interview was reconstructed in as much detail as possible after the interview, as recommended by King (1994).

To transcribe means to transform (Kvale, 1996) and thus transcriptions involve the transformation of speech into text. In this research, interviews were transcribed as soon as possible. No more than three interviews were conducted without transcription taking place, following the advice that transcription should take place as soon as possible after the interview, as memory will aid hearing (Gillham, 2000; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). In this way, the researcher also avoided a back-log of interviews requiring transcription, thus avoiding the creation of a daunting task to be embarked upon.

The act of transcription is not merely a clerical task but is an interpretive process in itself (Kvale, 1996) and Burns (1997) advises that the key is to remain more concerned with the substance of the interviews than maintaining perfect reproduction. This is in accordance with Bogdan and Biklen's (1992) advice, which is to transcribe the first couple of interviews as completely as possible, but then to narrow down what you transcribe in later interviews, when the types of information you are looking for may have become clearer and more focused and you can be more selective in terms of what you choose to transcribe and what you chose to omit. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) recommend that the benefits of taking this type of shortcut outweigh the potential dangers. Due to the relatively small sample size in this research, each interview was transcribed in full, except in the case of one participant who diverged from the topic a number of times, and therefore choices were made regarding which diversions added value to the research and were therefore worth transcribing.

Burns (1997) suggests that notes and transcriptions should be reviewed on a regular basis, so that the researcher can gain an awareness of contradictions or confirmations that are occurring, and a sense of the direction in which the findings are going. Gaining this awareness is further aided by doing one's own transcriptions, as this allows the researcher to become more familiar with the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992;

Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). For these reasons, the researcher in this study did the transcriptions personally.

Becoming familiar with the data, by making the transcripts and reading through them several times, is essential before the formal analysis process begins (Burns, 1997). In this research, the researcher read through each transcript at least twice before embarking on the formal analysis stage of the research, the details of which are described in the next section.

### ***The Analytical Process***

Strauss and Corbin (1990, as cited in Maykut & Morehouse, 1994) determined three approaches to analysis. In the first approach, the aim is to let the participants speak for themselves as much as possible and therefore the end product is an organised set of readings that are not systematically analysed. The second approach requires selection and interpretation in order to present the data as a descriptive, recognisable reality, and may hint at theory building. The third approach requires a deeper level of interpretation and abstraction of the data, in order that the data may be ordered into concepts and tenets of theory that aim to explain the phenomenon of interest (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). As the design of this research is both descriptive and exploratory, the aim was to analyse the data in a way that falls between Strauss and Corbin's second and third approaches. That is, existing theory and literature was used to analyse and interpret the data but the overall aim was to present a reality that is recognisable to both the participants of the research as well as others, and not to generate or formulate new theories, concepts or ideas.

Creswell (1998) notes that analyzing text is a formidable task for qualitative researchers, which is further compounded by the fact that "[t]here is no one single set of rules for the analysis of data from qualitative research interviews" (King, 1994, p. 24) and there are no formulae for the transformation of qualitative data into findings, only directions (Patton, 2002, as cited in Schutt, 2004; Punch, 1998). Despite no definite consensus, there are similarities between the analysis methods proposed by qualitative researchers. Two alternative ways in which to approach qualitative analysis were examined in some detail in Chapter 4, with regards to how the MOW

can be determined. A combination of the approaches and guidelines that various authors provide was used in the analysis of the data in this research.

Although the methods discussed here may sound like content analysis, use of this term has been avoided in this research as it appears that there is a lack of consistency in the literature regarding what content analysis is. On the one hand, Berelson (no date, as cited in Galtung, 1976) states that content analysis is a research technique for quantitatively, objectively and systematically describing data. On the other hand, Flick (2002, p.214) discusses content analysis as a qualitative method of the interpretation of data, but notes that it is “strongly oriented quantitative methodology”. Bauer (2000), however, suggests that content analysis is a method that bridges the divide between quality and quantity, between statistical formalism and qualitative analysis, and mediates the dispute over virtues and methods.

As already mentioned, the researcher read through each transcript at least twice before starting formal analysis. By reading, the researcher was able to start developing tentative ideas about relationships and categories (Maxwell, 1996). Following this, data was reduced, using Miles and Huberman’s process for analysis, in order to find emerging themes, clusters and patterns that could be coded for analysis and explanation (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Punch, 1998).

Initial data was reduced through two stages. First, the data was fractured and sorted so that it could be rearranged into categories, broader themes and issues, as recommended by Maxwell (1996), from which lists were made of all the themes that had emerged so far, with all of the quotations that supported each theme. Then a mindmap of the core themes was drawn. Figure 1 shows a portion of this mindmap.

With regards to coding, the researcher followed Burns’ (1997) suggestion, which is that instead of making up code names, codes should focus on the theoretical propositions on which the study is based. In this case, categories that emerged during the analysis were coded according to the theory on the MOW which was examined during the literature review. Some of the code names also reflected Bogdan and Biklen’s (1992) coding families, such as codes that related to context and participants’ views and opinions.

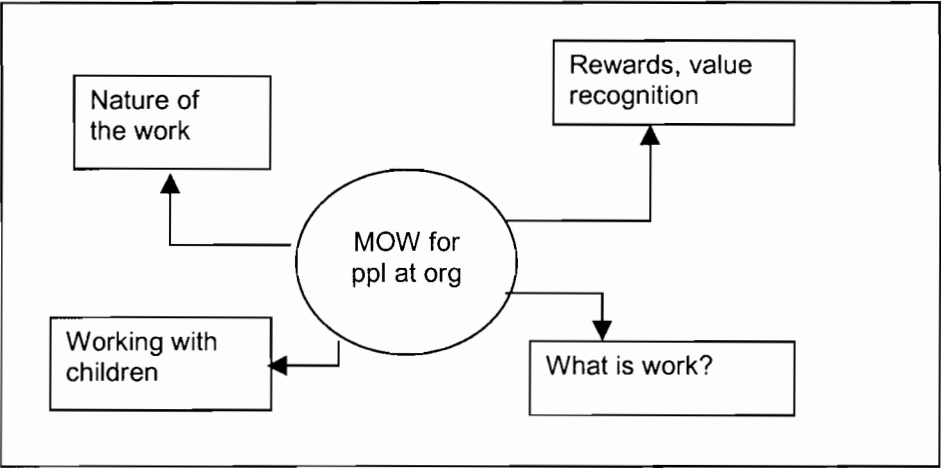


Figure 1. Portion of mindmap of core themes

Following the initial categorisation and coding process, the data was displayed according to Miles and Huberman’s (1994) second stage of analysis. Comprehensive mindmaps of each theme were drawn, including the subthemes that had emerged by this stage, with examples of the quotations illustrating each theme. The aim here was to compress, organize and assemble the information that was gathered during reduction (Punch, 1998) in order to present it in a form that could be grasped as a whole (Maxwell, 1996). Figure 2 is an example of one of these mindmaps.

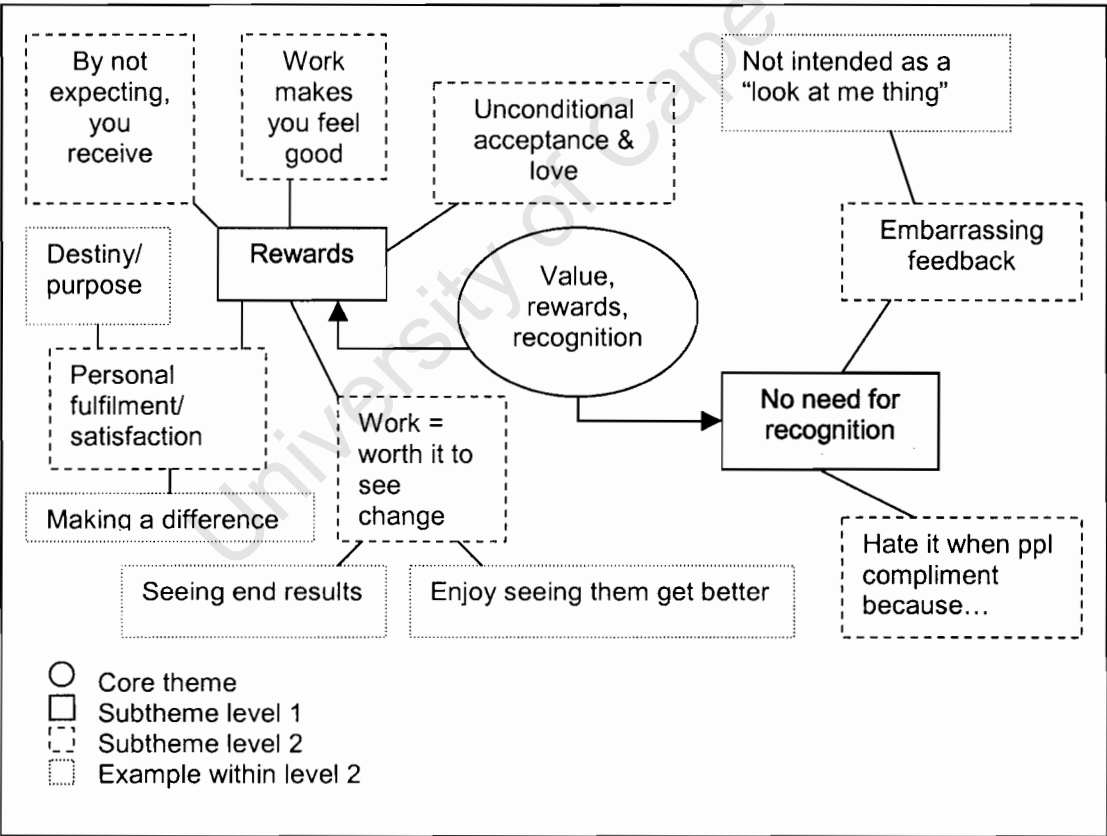


Figure 2. Example of a comprehensive mindmap of a core theme



Throughout this process, the researcher alternated between being immersed in the text in order to find meanings, and editing the lists and mindmaps to elicit categories and codes, through what Shutt (2004) calls the *literal* mode, where the focus was on content and form, and the *reflexive* mode, where the researcher focused on how personal orientations were shaping interpretations and focus.

The processes of data reduction and display continued throughout the analysis process and even continued while results were being recorded, because as the researcher engaged in the *interpretive* mode, and began to make interpretations on the meaning of the text (Miller & Crabtree, 1999, as cited in Schutt, 2004), additional links between themes and categories began to emerge. At times it became clear that certain information was better placed under different categories.

However, at all times, effort was made to remain deeply embedded in the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, as cited in Maxwell, 1996) and not to strip it of its context (Maxwell, 1996), because it is imperative that no information is lost during the data reduction stage of analysis, or the context of the information altered (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Punch, 1998). Therefore, the analysis process incorporated what Maxwell (1996, p. 79) calls “contextualizing strategies”, and attempts were made to understand the data in context, in order to identify the relationships between the different elements of the text. The focus was not on relationships of similarity that could be used to categorise data irrespective of context, but on looking for relationships that connect events and statements, within a context, and into a whole (Maxwell, 1996). This method was appropriate because of the importance of contextual issues in a study on the MOW, and as Maxwell (1996) notes, the strategies utilised need to be compatible with the questions being asked. Furthermore, as Nisbet et al. (1982) note, context cannot be ignored because it performs an integrating function and it is often the key to understanding. While a focus on context may be key to understanding in this particular research on the MOW, understanding is also not possible without the data being interpreted.

## ***Interpretation***

There are two types of knowledge that help us understand the world, namely explicit and tacit (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994), and while they are factors that shape the entire research process, they are often most influential during the interpretation stage of analysis. Tacit knowledge is more basic than explicit knowledge – it is the knowledge that we have during the act of doing something and it is unarticulated and unformulated (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Explicit knowledge, on the other hand, is knowledge that can be written down and critically reflected upon (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994).

While explicit knowledge can be physically recorded, tacit knowledge helps one to understand the environment (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Through the process of articulating observations and reflecting on one's explicit knowledge, tacit knowledge becomes more explicit, leading to it being able to be reflected upon too (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). During the interpretation phase of the analysis process, attempts were made to incorporate the tacit knowledge that had emerged during the research process, along with the explicit knowledge that had been gathered.

Denzin (2002, as cited in Schutt, 2004) proposes a number of questions that qualitative researchers should ask themselves at the end of the analysis process, regarding the materials that have been produced, such as “Do the materials illuminate the phenomenon as a lived experience?”. It was important for the researcher in this study to consider these questions to ensure that the interpretation of the analysis did in fact truly reflect the experiences of the participants.

Schutt (2004) notes that it is sometimes difficult to determine the quality of the analysis due to the variety of approaches available for analysing qualitative data. Some additional concerns and limitations relating to research methods are explored in the next section.

### ***Concerns and Limitations Relating to Qualitative Methods***

To guard against bias, Miller and Crabtree (1999, as cited in Schutt, 2004) advise the qualitative researcher to know their own biases and preconceptions. While this puts added responsibility on the researcher in terms of both collecting and determining the meaning of data, it is also vital in that aspects such as prejudices (pre-judgments) and preferences (what the researcher *wants* to find) need to be acknowledged and accounted for (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Assessing and acknowledging these prejudices and preferences is part of being reflective, which is an important process in qualitative research, and it holds that the researcher dwells within the 'system' under study (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). In this research, the researcher frequently engaged in self-reflection, in order to identify possible prejudices and biases that may be impacting the research process or the data being collected and analysed.

In addition, the researcher bore it in mind that the goal is to generate knowledge, description and understanding, not to pass judgment on a setting (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Furthermore, by not influencing or biasing the way participants respond to questions and by carefully selecting the questions and planning how they should be asked, as previously discussed, the researcher did all that was possible to prevent the data collected from being simply a product of the researcher-participant interactions (Alasuutari, 1998).

Qualitative researchers aim to objectively study the subjective states of the research participants and yet the researcher is the research instrument, in that they conduct the research and collect the data (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; Maxwell, 1996). It is this characteristic that leads to one of the biggest concerns regarding qualitative research, namely that the data that is chosen for collection and analysis is based on human subjectivity (Burns, 1997). However, bias can be a factor in experiments and other quantitative research methods as well (Burns, 1997), and therefore, while human subjectivity cannot be the basis for disregarding a qualitative study, it needs to be effectively managed and controlled. This was ensured, first, through the careful planning and design of research questions, and second, through awareness of the researcher's own biases and perceptions. While it is impossible for a researcher to avoid making decisions regarding what to focus on and how, all efforts were made to

ensure that the researcher's own frame of reference did not overly influence the questions asked or the data considered to be valuable and thus included in the analysis. To ensure this, it was necessary for the research to identify, to herself, her own frame of reference, which was largely determined by her knowledge of the literature and previous research and her own ideas and experiences of work.

The generalisation of findings is another concern of qualitative studies. However, a concern for generalisability should not lead to an indifference towards research that is aimed at something other than generalisation (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Despite the fact that the generalisation of findings may be an appealing research aim, the feasibility of it is based on a number of assumptions, such as whether human activity can ever be considered as context-free (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Furthermore, Donmoyer (2000) argues that a conception of generalisability that is concerned solely with sampling and statistical significance is no longer defensible or functional, and that it is especially problematic in applied fields, such as Organisational Psychology.

Maxwell (1996) distinguishes between internal and external generalisability, where internal generalisability refers to the generalization of conclusions within the setting or group studied, and external generalisability refers to generalisability beyond that setting or group, and he notes that external generalisability is not a crucial issue for qualitative researchers. In fact, Maxwell (1996) notes that the value of qualitative research is that it may not be externally generalisable. Therefore, even if this research only contributes towards an increased understanding of the experiences of working with HIV/AIDS patients at this particular organisation and the meaning that this type of work has for the people involved, it can and should be considered significant.

By limiting this research to one site, there is no implication that the results will be reflective of all people caring for HIV/AIDS-infected people (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). However, although cross-population generalisability is likely to be small, sample generalisability, which is the ability to generalize from a sample of a population to that population itself (Schutt, 2004), is more likely. That is, the MOW for carers of HIV/AIDS patients may not be comparable to the MOW for people involved in other areas of work, but may be comparable to people caring for HIV/AIDS patients in other settings.

As the checks that can be made on standardized and objective measures are not fitting for qualitative studies, concerns regarding validity arise when engaging in qualitative research (Burns, 1997). For example, internal validity, which aims to measure how well the findings match reality, is difficult to assess because the emphasis is on the participant's own understanding and interpretation of their experiences, and therefore it is difficult to measure the congruence between some notion of reality and the data collected (Burns, 1997). However, construct validity can be improved by comparing different sources of evidence and by establishing a chain of evidence (Burns, 1997). In the end though, the validity of research that relies on interview methods lies in the truthfulness and honesty of the participants (Alasuutari, 1998). Maxwell (1996) points out that one of the main threats to the valid interpretation of data is imposing one's own framework or meaning, as opposed to understanding the perspective of the research participants, and the meaning that they attach to their words and actions. At all times, the selection of data from a personal frame of reference was avoided by constantly reflecting on what data was being selected and why

### *Areas for Consideration in This Study*

Burns (1997) states that it is important not to confuse anonymity and confidentiality, as promising these conditions without their differences being clear may lead to problems. In this research, it was impossible to keep respondents anonymous as it is a relatively small organisation and therefore those who participated and those who did not would have often been apparent to others. Confidentiality was, however, ensured and the research report does not contain any details that may contribute to the identification of participants. Each participant signed a consent form before the interview was conducted, to ensure that it was understood why the research was being conducted and what would be done with the research results.

The researcher recognised, at the beginning of the research process, the potential effect that the researcher's own role may have on the organisation and due concern was exercised around this point. The organisation has a counsellor who meets with the employees on a weekly basis, and the possibility of repercussions of this research and the potential need for ongoing assistance with some of the issues that may arise, was

discussed with the counsellor prior to entering the organisation. This issue was also considered when the decision not to get too involved in the organisation was made, as previously discussed.

Despite achieving the objectives of the research, two significant drawbacks were encountered. First, an unanticipated language barrier existed between the researcher and the participants. The researcher had been led to believe that language would not be an issue, and therefore did not consider the use of a translator to be necessary. However, in some cases language did turn out to be a problem, which in turn undermined the quality of the interview and thus the data. Secondly, although it had been anticipated that the MOW may not have been an issue to which participants had given previous thought and due caution had been taken in the design of the questions, at times, the researcher struggled to effectively communicate to the participants the nature of the information that was being sought.

### ***Summation***

Due to an acknowledgement of the fact that results have real consequences, the analysis process was concluded by a consideration of characteristics such as research integrity and quality and checks were conducted regarding whether the chosen research methods had been adhered to and whether the results were authentic and valid (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Following this, the researcher began to record and discuss the results of the analysis, and these are presented in the next two chapters.

## Chapter Six

### **Results and Discussion: Contextual Factors Affecting the Experience of Work**

Three overarching, main themes emerged through the data analysis process. The purpose of this chapter is to record and discuss the first main theme, namely, the contextual factors that affect the experience of work. The remaining two themes, how religious beliefs impact and shape the experience of work, and the factors that influence the way in which work is defined by the participants, are described and discussed in Chapter Seven. The results and discussion sections of this research have been merged due to the qualitative nature of the results and to avoid repetition.

At the conclusion of their research on the effects of context on the MOW, Salancik and Brand (1992) state that context has a strong influence on the meaning that people attach to work. Similarly, Fineman (1991) notes that environment always determines meaning. There were a number of different contextual factors that emerged in this research as having an impact on people's work experiences and therefore on the meaning that their work holds for them. These contextual factors fall into three areas, namely the individual context, broader contextual issues relating to South African society, and context due to the nature of the work.

#### ***The Individual Context***

The results relevant to individuals are described in terms of personality, age and gender.

## Personality

Flora (1999) notes that personality traits interact with the workplace environment as well as with job content, and depending on the circumstances and the nature of the work, personality traits can be either enhanced or undermined. However, despite the clear role of personal factors, people and their values, differ according to different times and stages in life (Ciulla, 2000) and therefore, as Nord et al. (1990) caution, there should not be an expectation of uniformity across people, place and time. Furthermore, due to the diversity of personal traits and characteristics that may influence people's work experiences, and because of the newness of this work context, there is a lack of specific information from other studies to discuss in relation to these findings. That is, other research has not elicited the same individual characteristics as participants in this research displayed. The individual values and characteristics that were identified as having an impact on people's experiences of working in this study are however, still interesting to consider.

Having compassion and a fighting spirit were identified as aspects that characterise the people who work in this organisation, for as one participant noted: *"I want to say we're all here because we have a heart for what we do...and we all have a fighting spirit"*. It was found, however, that in order to be successful in this type of work, having a heart for the work needed to be combined with having business skills, as illustrated by the comment: *"You have to have a business background...[and a] soft-heart...people that have the combination of the two skills - they know how to run a tight ship, but they also know how to give out love"*. Having a non-judgemental attitude was also considered to be important *"[because] it doesn't actually matter how you get [the disease] or whatever happens, our job is still to go out there and give the love and look after the people...God loves these children and it's for us to learn not to judge"*. People who work here also need to be sure that they are involved in work that is suitable for themselves and that they are working in the right environment, for as one participant commented: *"if you weren't sure you were in exactly the right place you wouldn't have the stamina to continue"*.



## Age

Harpaz et al. (2002) note that age related experiences regarding work attitudes are both normative and universal, while Loscocco and Kalleberg (1988) observe that most studies on the MOW do not consider the ways in which work attitudes differ according to one's life stage, and similarly, that studies on age and social change have not considered the MOW. Although participants commented upon different aspects of age, it is clear from this research, that age is a factor that influences the experience of work. One participant said that "*[dealing with the death of children is] not that difficult for me...[I am] getting old so [I am] getting used to that*", thus demonstrating how age has an impact on how people cope with various facets of the work. From this, age may be considered as a factor that may influence a person's decision to be involved in work where the death of children is a regular reality.

Brief and Nord (1990b) note that what is considered as meaningful may change over time and according to life stages, and this aspect emerged in this study, as seen by the following comment: "*had you asked me that when I was younger, I would have said 'no, go and work' but now looking back on my life, or looking at my children's lives, I think you're missing out so much because you're working. But I suppose that's what they say – age brings wisdom*". While this finding contrasts that of England and Harpaz (1990), who found that age created no significant influence on the MOW for their research sample, it supports what Loscocco and Kalleberg (1988) suggested after considering sociological perspectives on age, namely that as individuals move through various life stages, the meaning that they derive from work changes.

## Gender

With regards to gender, England and Harpaz (1990) found that there was a statistically significant gender influence on the definition pattern distributions for meaning, but that the differences were difficult to interpret. In this study however, the ways in which gender influenced the experience of work were clearer. Gender was communicated as being an influence because of two main features. First, because of the different attitudes people have towards others of different genders, illustrated by the comment "*at my previous job...the doctors were very nasty and I don't think it*

would have been like that if I was a man...Yes, yes, definitely [they were chauvinistic]”. Second, because of the different emotions that people have as a result of their gender, an aspect which is clearly communicated by this comment “*in this situation the fact that I am a female and that I’ve got emotions makes a huge difference...I would say that it’s a positive influence the fact that I am a woman in a position that I’m at working in this environment*”.

Since the time of hunter-gathering societies, where the division of survival-related tasks were divided along gender lines (Neff, 1985), the nature of work has been influenced by gender. While gendered attitudes towards work are currently changing, gender has had a significant impact on both men and women’s experiences of work over the ages, and it is clear from this study, that gender is a factor that influences the experience of work for this sample. However, what is interesting to note, is that most participants appeared to be unable to decide whether the influence was positive or negative.

Neff (1985) notes that until recently, society in general viewed work as a role to be fulfilled by men, and the term ‘worker’ inherently referred to a man. This type of view regarding gender emerged in this study as having an influence on how society values a person’s work, for when it was asked whether it was their opinion that society values the work of males and female differently, one participant said: “*Definitely*”. Other ways in which societal views and values may influence one’s work experience will be examined in the next section, along with other broader contextual issues.

### ***Broader Contextual Issues: South Africa and Society***

When the MOW-IRT (1981 & 1987) carried out their pioneering project, they based their research on the understanding that the MOW is partly determined by the environmental context in which one lives and works. Features of the broader environment that emerged as influential to the experiences of work for participants in this study, are as follows.

## ***Societal Views/Values***

Bowden (1997) notes that nursing practices are predominantly carried out by women, and Clark and Seymour (1999) note that studies that have deconstructed caring have shown that care is related to the division of labour. Although referring to informal carers mostly caring for family members, Clark and Seymour (1999) state that it is more likely for women to take the main responsibility for caring and that they spend more time devoted to caring activities than men. It is clear from these statements, that the work of women and nursing / caring work are linked. Furthermore, as it is likely that work values will reflect societal values, because work meanings incorporate a social dimension, encompassing social norms and socialisation (Ruiz Quintanilla, 1991), it is likely that the work values of a woman involved in nursing work will reflect societal views of both women and the nursing profession.

This idea is supported by this research, for when one participant in this study was asked whether society views their work differently because she is a woman, she said : *“Ya, especially as a nurse...I think society sees nurses as glorified cleaners...it's definitely an undervalued profession...I think that that's one of the big reasons why I want to get out of nursing...because of people's ideas of what nursing is and me as a nurse”*. This response not only links the work of nurses and women, but shows how society's views (of the nursing profession and the work that nurses do) have an impact on how this participant values her own work and how it has an impact on the experience of working as a nurse.

Societal views of work in general also emerged as a factor that can influence a person's work experiences. One participant noted that: *“there is a lot of pressure in society to work...there was a lot of pressure on me when I was a housewife...why I wasn't working”*. This gave the impression that they felt that society views paid work and work outside the home as more valuable than the work she was engaged in and, therefore, that non-engagement in paid or outside-of-home work somehow made them a less valuable person. One of the aspects emphasised about this participant's current work, is that it is a contribution into other people's lives, and in so doing, this participant is engaging in something that is considered by society as valuable. It is clear that this participant's experience of societal views while not engaging in work

has had an impact on how work is viewed and what makes work meaningful. Being able to contribute to other people's lives through their work was frequently raised by participants, often in conjunction with the South African situation regarding orphans, street children, and poverty.

### ***Orphans, Street Children, Poverty and Unemployment***

The following comment from one of the participants clearly shows the impact of contextual factors: *"If [I] had money, [I] would have started [my] own business, just to take all the kids off the street... [I] wish [I] could do more, even now, but [I] can't. So that's why [I] came to work here, at least [I am] doing some help for the kids in the community"*. It is understandable that the South African situation regarding orphans and street children was one of the broader contextual factors identified for those people who are involved in HIV/AIDS care for children, as having an effect on the experiences of working. Street children are at risk of HIV infection due to drug use and sexual exploitation (Thorne, 1997) and orphaned girls may be more vulnerable to HIV infection through sexual exploitation or involvement in commercial sex in order to provide for material needs (Foster, 1998). AIDS also leads to increased numbers of orphans, due to HIV/AIDS-related deaths of their parents (Foster, 1998).

Also pertaining to the South African situation regarding street children and orphans, another participant noted: *"looking at the children standing in the street, and there being so many orphans around, that you do realize that it is a big problem, and if we want to solve it – for me – its getting the children off the street, making sure that they are well cared for, then you will have adults that grow up and won't go into crime and make the whole country a more difficult place to be. That's why I think that looking after the children is the first priority that needs to be done"*. This participant's motivation for working in this context and the value placed on this work, is clear from this comment, which echoes Burggraf's (1997, as cited in Wolfe, 1997) opinion that one of the most important forms of work is raising the next generation.

It was previously mentioned that orphaned girls may be more vulnerable to HIV infection through involvement in commercial sex as a result of the necessity to provide for material needs, prostitution being an issue arising from the broader

situation regarding poverty in South Africa. Poverty and its impact on context and experience was identified by one participant, who commented: *“Especially when I realized that some of these children are to go home and I know about the life situation at home in the townships, it really, it makes me appreciate life so much more”*. It is clear that an awareness of the surrounding poverty has had an impact on this participant’s work and life experiences.

Barnett and Whiteside (2002) state that the spread of HIV is facilitated by poverty and that AIDS deepens poverty and undermines efforts at poverty reduction, while Foster (1998) notes that poverty is frequently associated with an increased vulnerability to HIV/AIDS because not only does HIV infection thrive in impoverished environments, but the disease itself contributes to poverty through unemployment and additional strain on resources. Some participants in this research also discussed poverty in relation to the HIV/AIDS situation, noting: *“most of the children that arrive here, are from very, very poor homes. So poor, that they are going into full blown AIDS before anyone should. I mean, if you and I had a child that was positive, they could probably get to 10 years before going into AIDS. So we are also dealing with something that is so different”*; and *“First of all, its poverty. If there is nobody working at home, it not easy to cope with [HIV/AIDS]. It’s a terrible situation”*. This research shows that the social context of HIV/AIDS, and an awareness of this context, is a factor that influences the participants’ experiences of work, and this finding supports what Brouwer, Loks, Wolffers and Sebagalls (2000) found, namely that the concerns of people caring for HIV-infected children were frequently related to concerns about poverty.

It was concluded in the review of the literature, when the relationship between work and unemployment (as a non-work domain) was considered, that work may take on different meanings for people who have experienced unemployment. This emerged in the findings of this study, with one participant noting that: *“it is a privilege to get a job in the new South Africa. I mean, it’s really difficult...to get a job. And I was now getting desperate for a job”*. This comment leaves the impression that due to the experience of unemployment, the work that this participant now has is more meaningful to them. This interpretation emerges from awareness of Fox’s (1980) opinion, which is that until a person experiences deprivation of something, it may be

difficult to distinguish exactly what provides one with meaning and what does not. For example, until one experiences unemployment, a person may not realise the meaning that working contributes to their life. In South Africa, unemployment is strongly associated with economic standing, which in turn is associated with social standing, and these also emerged as factors influencing the experience and meaning of work.

### ***Economic and Social Standing***

Fox (1980) states that one's location in societal class structures is linked to the way individuals experience work and Brief and Nord (1990b) state that one's existing wealth and level of economic need affects the meaning of one's work. In this research, it was interesting to note the differences in attitudes towards work between participants from impoverished backgrounds and participants from more affluent backgrounds. While there are no specific quotations that can be used to illustrate this point, the researcher began to become aware, during the course of conducting the interviews and analysing the results, of the fact that it was more common for participants from impoverished backgrounds to stress the financial implications of their work experiences, while participants from more affluent backgrounds tended to focus on the nonpecuniary motives and implications of their work, although money was still a factor for these participants. This finding supports other research findings: Morse and Weiss (1962, 1968) found that the non-monetary functions served by work are different for middle- and working-class occupations; Friedmann and Havighurst (1962) found that people in higher social and economic classes stress the non-financial meanings of work to a greater extent than workers involved, for example, in heavy industry, while Fox (1980) notes that the extrinsic and instrumental benefits of working are also valued by classes higher up the occupational ladder.

### ***The Nature of the Work – It's Impact on Context and Experience***

It was noted at the beginning of this section that the MOW-IRT (1981 & 1987) based their research on the understanding that the MOW is partly determined by the environmental context in which one lives and works. In addition, their research was

also based on the understanding that organisational context is one of the factors that contributes towards the determination of work meanings.

In this research, two aspects relating to organisational context deriving from the nature of the work, emerged as having an impact on participants' experiences of work. The first is shift work, and the second is the fact that the work is focused on caring for chronically ill and dying children.

### ***Working the Night Shift***

There are a number of factors, many of them negative, that have emerged from research done with people who do shift work. Regarding working the night shift, participants commented that: *"there's not much to do at night than during the day"*, and that *"until 9 o'clock [at night] you are really busy and after that it's boring"*. The fact that not having enough work to do or having boring work has an effect on one's work experiences, is supported by Harpaz (1990, as cited in Harpaz et al., 2002), who found that one of the two most dominant work goals was 'interesting work', and that this was consistent across countries, across organisational levels, between genders, and among different ages. Participants also noted that working at night means less interaction with people who are not patients, such as visitors, as illustrated by the comments: *"there [aren't] the usual daily things like...people coming to see the patients"*, and *"during the day we...welcome the volunteers and visitors and tell them 'this child had this when it came, but now it is better or whatever', [but] at night we just look after the kids"*.

Working at night was also identified as having an impact on sleep habits. One participant noted not only that *"It's just not very nice to work at night...Because you go to sleep when everyone else is awake and you know, you don't get to see your friends a lot...[and] its quite hard for me to sleep during the day"*, but that when working at night, *"I struggle to stay awake at times"*. This finding echoes what Da Silva Borges and Fischer (2003) discuss, namely that all the studies that have been conducted on nurses who work the night shift have found that shift work is a significant stress to nurses, particularly with regards to sleep quantity and quality. Similarly, Johnson (2004) notes that shift workers suffer from higher rates of sleep

disorders. The finding of this study is however, contrary to what Tucker and Smith (1998) found, which was that 12 hour shifts (such as are worked by some of the participants in this study) were associated with improved ratings of rest levels and sleep quality.

Working the night shift was also identified as a factor that has an impact on home life, for as participants noted: *"It's not hard for [me] to work at night because [I] like to sit with [my] kids during the day. So [I] like working at night"*; and *"for me it is nice [to work at night] because at home I can stay with my son and play with him all day, so I know at night he is sleeping. So I mean it is fine."* However, one participant who works the night shift noted the opposite, saying that: *"If you are at night shift, you don't spend the night with your family...I prefer to work during the day [so that I can spend time with my child]"*, and this finding is supported by Bauer (1993, as cited in Tucker & Smith, 1998), who found that shift workers complained about the impact of their work on their family life.

It is interesting to consider the impact that working at night has on home life in relation to the literature on work and family conflict, which is basically concerned with the fact that the demands of one's work roles may make it difficult to comply with the demands of one's family roles, and vice versa (Schreuder & Theron, 1997). It is clear from the first two participants quoted here, that their work role makes it easier to cope with their family role/home life, while for the other participant, there is a clear conflict between work and family life and this conflict is time-based, in that the time that is devoted to the work role means that that time cannot be devoted to the family role/home life (Schreuder & Theron, 1997).

While it is not a characteristic that can be changed, because more children dying at night is not an inherent characteristic of working the night shift, this factor emerged as an aspect that impacts the experience of working the night shift, as illustrated by the comment: *"on my own [experience], most of the things happen at night, so like, for instance the kids...they die at night, or all those things happen"*. It is understandable that the experience of working with chronically ill and dying children emerged as being more influential than just having an effect on working the night shift, and the discussion progresses to examining these other aspects.



## ***Working With Terminally / Chronically Ill Children - Facing Death***

The nature of the work emerged as having a significant impact on participants' experiences of work. The following comment clearly communicates the nature of the work that this organisation is involved in, namely, working with sick and dying children: *"Being sick with AIDS - it's not like being sick with other sicknesses, if you are sick with AIDS there is death before you"*.

In relation to the nature of the work, participants described the work that they are involved in as being: *"all consuming because it is so emotional"*; *"very demanding job"*; and *"it's very stressful, it's very emotional, it's very draining"*. The purpose of this section is to explore the impact of the nature of this work on how participants prepare for and cope with this type of work.

### ***Preparation and coping***

Clark and Seymour (1999) list death due to HIV/AIDS in the category of premature death, which refers to death that takes place before a person has the chance to experience a typical human life cycle, and this category is in contrast to 'gradual death', which is considered to be death that is protracted and anticipated and which comes at the end of a long life. It is true that a child's death due to HIV/AIDS means that they do not die at the end of a long life, and thus this type of death can be correctly categorised as 'premature death' according to Clark and Seymour's (1999) categorisation system. However, some of the characteristics of 'gradual death' are also the same for death from HIV/AIDS, in that the illnesses caused by the disease are generally protracted and as there is no cure, death from the disease can be anticipated.

The criteria of protracted illness and anticipated death were clearly identified by participants as being factors in their work experience. One participant noted: *"I just keep in mind that they are dying and you can tell when they are sick so, I don't know...I don't think I do anything else to prepare myself. But...you can tell when it is happening so it's not like its something sudden"*. Another participant made a comment along similar lines: *"It hasn't really affected me so much. Maybe it was*

*because I still keep a bit of a professional distance with the children. I still love them and all of that, but I still have told my brain not to get too attached because there is a strong possibility they're...gonna die and go to heaven".* However, it is clear from these comments that participants gave these negative factors a positive slant, illustrating how they can be used to aid preparation for a child's death.

Some of the participants found that it is sometimes difficult to accept that their patients are going to die, and this can be identified by comments such as: *"If you have had the child coming in being sick, and um, the normal process of how to deal with it is fine, but when you have someone that looks healthy and is not a problem, and then the next morning you get here and that is the child that just went to sleep and did not wake up...It is very difficult, it's hard. I cry"*. The hope that children with HIV/AIDS will remain healthy, and therefore the subsequent difficulty of later dealing with their illnesses, is one of the reasons that prompts Buhrich (1989, as cited in Bennett et al., 1991) to warn those involved in caring for PWHAs against the 'inevitable disappointments' that may arise during their work.

On the other hand, some participants commented: *"AIDS is a life-threatening disease, you know, and we don't have the power of life or death in our hands. We can maybe get them up to a certain point"* and *"we have to realize that we've always been in this mode...you are in the health professions you have to get somebody better...and let's go home. And unfortunately, that's not happening...[the outlook] has to change. That outlook is not the right one to have...it sometimes does [happen that people cannot be cured]"*. These comments show that in order to prepare for working with HIV/AIDS, the participants have come to terms with the fact that they cannot cure their patients of the disease, and are therefore aware of the limits of the care they can provide. In addition, it appears that this is an issue that has been accepted, as epitomized by the comment: *"You can only do so much and you have to realize it... we have to accept that"*. Thus the findings of this study are in contrast to other research, which has found that absence of a cure and thus unavoidable fatality (Bennett et al., 1991; Van Dis & Van Dongen, 1993 as cited in Miller, 2000), are factors that have had a detrimental impact on HIV/AIDS carers.

Their acceptance of the inability to cure and unavoidable fatality, that is synonymous with HIV/AIDS care, clearly shows how participants view their caring role and what it means to them. They do not draw meaning from being able to cure patients, and the fact that they are still committed to their work despite this, shows that they draw meaning from elsewhere.

Walker et al. (1996) note that caregivers of PWHA are often encouraged to progress quickly through the grief process, through justifications that the patient's death may be a better option than to continue suffering. The findings of this study show that this advice may in fact be appropriate, because the participants themselves use this kind of justification to deal with the death of their patients, for as one participant noted:

*"sometimes it really is a relief because it's better for the children to die."*

Participants also tended to focus on the fact that death was a relief for the children and a better option than suffering, and on the fact that after dying, the children were going to a place that is better than life on this earth, as exemplified by the following quotation: *"[I] trust that whatever happens actually is the right thing. So it's amazing, when there is a death, it's never that sad because...in most cases, you actually are so grateful to God for taking that child out of their suffering....you know they've gone to a better place"*.

Similarly, in her examination of an organisation caring for the needs of HIV-infected children, Blaney (2000) found that carers felt that sometimes it was better for the children to be relieved of their suffering through death. The carers did not, however, consider the death of a child as something natural (Blaney, 2000), and the findings of this research are similar, and can be epitomised by the comment: *"I wasn't even around but it really does have an impact on you because dealing with a child dying is not a normal thing. It's not a normal phenomenon...you sometimes think, well, you're going to become totally immune to it, but you don't"*. This finding is also supported by other literature, for as Ulla et al. (2003) note, child mortality rates were much higher a century ago and therefore childhood death frequently accepted, whereas childhood death is now experienced as something terrible and uncommon, due to technological and medical advancements that have increased life expectancy.

A central tenet of the Christian faith, of which the participants in this study are followers, is a belief that what happens after death is actually a more desirable option to life on earth. Considering this, it is understandable that this way of thinking is used to justify the children's deaths, as illustrated by previous comments. As this mode of thinking brings comfort when dealing with the death of the children, it is clear that the participants' religious convictions are utilised as a coping mechanism. Similarly, one of the carers for children infected with HIV at the organisation which was the focus of Blaney's (2000) examination, as previously described, was comforted at the death of the children by the belief that God was in control of what was happening.

In addition to relying on their faith to justify the death of their patients, prayer was identified as an effective way to cope with the death of patients, as illustrated by this comment: *"The only way to make me feel better is to pray...I just pray to God that it must go away, I must face the day... It's my only way to get rid of my sadness, you know. So we prayed in the morning...so I can feel better"*. This finding is supported by Rose and Clark-Alexander (1998), who state that prayer has been identified as a beneficial coping method, and whose research found that 80% of their sample used prayer as a method of coping with the care of HIV-infected children. However, it contradicts those of Bennett et al. (1993, as cited in Gueritault-Chalvin et al., 2000) and Gueritault-Chalvin et al., who found that strategies such as a reliance on prayers were not effective coping strategies and in fact led to higher levels of burnout.

Cronin-Stubbs and Brophy (1985, as cited in Bellani et al., 1996) found that experience was a factor that mediated the negative effects (leading to burnout) of caring for PWHA, and this study is in accordance with their finding. One participant commented that *"the child is dying now and you are there and you have to love the child, so, if it's your first time, it's difficult...but it becomes [easier] every time when you see it, you know. And it's not a nice thing to experience."*, thus indicating that the experience of dealing with death becomes easier with each occurrence.

This study found, in relation to coping, that the nature of the work has an impact on interpersonal relationships, for as one participant noted: *"And that is very difficult and sometimes we do take out our stress on each other here"*. This negative impact of stress on relationships is important to consider for a study on the MOW, because

Kaplan and Tausky (1974, as cited in Snir & Harpaz, 2002) found that interactions experienced in the workplace play a prominent role in satisfying people's needs for interpersonal relationships and that these relationships are an important aspect of one's work experience.

In order to prevent becoming emotionally drained due to the nature of the work, taking a break from this type of work was identified as an effective preventative-coping strategy. One participant commented: *"Because the problem is that this work can be all consuming because it is so emotional...you physically have to take the time off. Its no use being paid extra or whatever, you have to take the rest and the break from the pressured environment."* While not necessarily needing to take a complete break from the work, other participants did recognise the need to balance their work and non-work lives, illustrated by the comment: *"it's very important to work and be dedicated when you are there but also very important to make time to relax and just to enjoy life as well"*. The participants in Kirsh's (2000) study similarly expressed a need for balance between the positive effects of work, such as improved economics, and the negative effects, such as stress. The findings regarding needing to have a balance between work and non-work activities also relate to what Coleman (1993; as cited in Snir & Harpaz, 2002) and Coleman and Iso-Ahola (1993, as cited in Snir & Harpaz, 2002) found, which was that participating in leisure activities has a positive effect on satisfaction, psychological well-being and health.

The rationale of thinking that balancing experiences due to the nature of the work with contrasting experiences (such as relaxing leisure activities) may be beneficial to the work experience, can be explained by examining the spillover model for work-non-work relations. The spillover model proposes that the nature of a person's work experience will have a spillover effect on the non-work domain, thus influencing and affecting the person's attitudes and behaviours (Champoux, 1978; Wilensky, 1960, as cited in Snir & Harpaz, 2002). Brief and Nord (1990c) found that in a number of work-leisure investigations, the results have been consistent with the spillover hypothesis. Brief and Nord (1990c) note that the opposite also occurs, in that one's attitudes and behaviours from one's non-work experience can spillover into one's work experience, for example, satisfaction or dissatisfaction with one's leisure activities can impact on one's satisfaction or dissatisfaction with work experiences.

This model can be used to understand why participants in this study feel the need to balance their work with non-work activities, so that the positive effects of their non-work activities can spillover into their work activities in order to combat some of the negative work experiences. Likewise, so that when negative experiences due to the nature of the work spillover into their non-work life and activities, they can be balanced with positive experiences due to engaging in beneficial non-work activities.

The need for balance could possibly be explained by various theories, such as those regarding role conflict, of which there may be a variety of sources. The type of role conflict that is most likely to occur for these participants is that which arises when the demands of one's work role may be in conflict with the individual's own needs (Wieland & Ullrich, 1976). However, the analysis did not elicit enough information to confirm whether this theory would be an appropriate way to interpret the participant's need for balance, and the spillover model is considered to be more appropriate in this instance.

### *Summation*

This chapter began by considering the contextual factors that affect the experience of work, and this theme was discussed in three sections, namely the individual context; broader contextual issues regarding South Africa and society; and context due to the nature of the work. The examination of these areas and the ensuing discussion, demonstrate the impact that context has on the MOW, to which Salancik and Brand (1992) have previously drawn attention.

Participants' religious beliefs and the religious context of the organisation also emerged as having a profound influence on people's experiences of work. Due to the variety of contextual influences on experience, it is expected that people understand and define work and working in a variety of ways. Some of these will be examined in the next chapter.

## Chapter Seven

### Results and Discussion: A New Context for Defining Work

#### *Religious Beliefs and the Work Experience*

According to Davidson and Caddell (1994), most research suggests that religion is generally irrelevant to the work experience, and they cite a number of studies that have shown that religion has little or no impact on the way people view work. However, after completing their study on religion and the MOW, Davidson and Caddell (1994) commented that the effects of religion have been overlooked in other studies. Similarly, Hadden (1987, as cited in Davidson & Caddell, 1994) points out that research results that show that religion has little or no impact on the way people view work are not based on real evidence but on the respective researcher's assumptions that religion has no effect. For this reason, it is difficult to find literature or other studies against which to compare this aspect of the research findings. However, as the findings are interesting and relevant for this particular research, they will still be presented despite the lack of comparative data. They are also meaningful and important because as Brief et al. (1990) comment, people seem to be seeking to relate their existence to a larger purpose and as work is such a major part of many people's existence, many are seeking to relate their work to a higher purpose.

Brief and Nord (1990b) state that the MOW is tied to a person's beliefs, values and attitudes and these are all factors that tend to be influenced by one's religious beliefs or orientation. The religious orientation of the participants in this study, as being followers of the Christian faith, was found to have an impact on a number of different aspects of the work experience.

It was found that religious beliefs have an impact on work experiences in five areas. First, participants felt that people's religious beliefs have an impact on the work environment and subsequently on work experiences, as illustrated by the following comment: *"I am glad to work in a place where everybody knows God because that has got an influence to everyone in here...it's just a positive atmosphere to work in a Christian place"*. This finding is consistent with the literature and research on organisational culture, which is a phenomenon that influences work environments and which is, itself, influenced by people's beliefs and values (Eldridge & Crombie, 1974, as cited in Brown, 1995). Furthermore, working in this environment was identified as having a positive impact on life in general, as seen in this comment: *"It's made such an improvement in my life...it's been such a healthy environment...the spiritual and mental support that I got here was amazing - and I've never experienced that in my life before, at another job. So it's definitely made a good impact on my life"*.

Secondly, it was found that religious orientation has an impact on one's expectations of people and relationships, as seen by comments such as: *"my expectations for working in a Christian organisation were that you'd never have an argument, never disagree, but...for me, it has been extremely difficult...Because to me a Christian organisation, as I said, everybody, it was always holy and nice, and no one really had an argument, or you didn't disagree. I don't know why I thought that"*. Not only was religious orientation and beliefs identified as having an impact on participants' relationships with co-workers, but on their relationships with other people too, as the following comment demonstrates: *"to be a Christian, you know how to work with people, how to handle people, how to talk with the mother..."*.

Thirdly, it was found that a person's religious beliefs have an impact on their choice of where to seek work. Participants noted that: *"It's not such a major thing but it definitely was a deciding factor"* and *"I just thought it might be nice to work in a Christian place for a change"*. Not only do religious beliefs impact the choice of where to work, but the participants' orientation towards the Christian faith and thus the work-related principles that this religion espouses, was found to have an impact on why people choose to work in general and this is the fourth area that was identified. Odgers (2004), for example, notes that according to the Bible, God created people not only to be workers but to be co-workers with him, and the following comments



illustrate this: *“I very strongly believe in the principle of work...this is because I am from a Christian background...if you work, I believe that you will earn your keep”* and *“if you do have the strength to work, then you must do whatever you can because it’s what we do down on earth that God sees”*.

One participant noted: *“To me as a Christian I actually feel it is a duty to take care of the poor, the widowed and the orphaned”*, which links together religion-based principles for work and the notion that work is a way of contributing to society. Other participants made similar comments regarding one’s duty to work, as epitomised by the following statement: *“I believe everybody should [work as a way of contributing to society]...I just think because we are in a country that has so much need...I can’t see how somebody can live in a cocoon and think there’s nobody else besides them and their family... there are different contributions...[but] bottom line, I believe that everybody has a responsibility to give to some extent”*. That people in this study feel obligated to help others, and thus seek work that makes a contribution to society, is in line with one of the six major dimensions of work meanings as determined by the MOW-IRT (1981 & 1987), namely the obligation norm.

In general the obligation norm relates to the duty of individuals to contribute to organisations and society through working (England & Whitely, 1990; Schwartz, 1999; Snir & Harpaz, 2002) and the notion of duty stems from the Protestant work ethic (Randall & Cote, 1991, as cited in Snir & Harpaz, 2002), which views work as a calling through which religious behaviour can be projected into the everyday world (Bell, 1997, as cited in Wolfe, 1997). The comment about why South Africans should not live in a cocoon ties in with the fact that the obligation norm is based on the view that the individual is an integral part of a collective (Schwartz, 1999).

Lastly, the participants’ religious orientation was identified as a factor that influences whether people view their work as a calling or not. Davidson and Caddell (1994) found that religion provides a framework within which 15% of their sample viewed work as having sacred significance. They found that the internalisation of religion caused people who already thought of work as important, to take the additional step of viewing their work as a calling, and also that the more people thought of themselves as religious, the more likely they were to view their work as a calling. In addition,

they note that religion is not just a framework for people with poor jobs to convince themselves that their work is meaningful, but that it provides a context for viewing rewarding work in sacred and not just in secular terms. The organisation in this study is rooted in Christian principles and all of the participants in this study were followers of the Christian faith, and therefore, considering Davidson and Caddell's (1994) comments, it is not surprising that many of them viewed their work as 'a calling', as encapsulated by the following quotations: *"it's actually a calling for me. I know that God just placed me in this job"* and *"I see what I do as a ministry. I am not doing it as a career...what I do now, is an extension of my sense of calling as a Christian"*. As identified by Welch (1998) as a characteristic of 'Nineties spirituality', working in this organisation has allowed participants to apply religious beliefs and values to their work.

### ***Work as a Calling - Intrinsic Orientations towards Work***

As mentioned in Chapter Two, two major orientations towards work have been identified, namely, intrinsic and extrinsic (Roberson, 1990). People with an intrinsic orientation towards work value working as an activity because it allows them opportunities to attain desired outcomes, which are those that are believed to be produced by the work itself, that is, the actual content and substance of the work are considered as important rewards (Roberson, 1990). On the other hand, people with an extrinsic orientation view work and working as a means to an end – an instrumental tool for attaining indirect rewards (Roberson, 1990).

It was also previously discussed in Chapter Two, that viewing work as a calling generally refers to an attitude towards work. Many of the participants in this study view their work as a calling because they are motivated to do their work because of their religious beliefs and not just because it is a set of activities that will lead to certain rewards. Viewing work as a calling in this manner, demonstrates an intrinsic orientation towards work.

The two comments from this study that clearly illustrate the participants' intrinsic orientation towards work are the following: *"It's just showing them the love of the Lord"*; and *"our only job is to be the arms of Jesus to these children"*. Reidy and

Taggart (1991) also observed that accepting the responsibility to care for a child with HIV or AIDS is a statement of values and attitudes, and that the need to act according to these values and beliefs is related to morals and spirituality.

In addition to the intrinsic orientation towards work that emerged as a result of viewing work as a calling, the analysis elicited a number of alternative intrinsic factors that influence the participants' choice to be involved in work of this nature, and these factors will be discussed in the remainder of this section. However, there is a lack of research and literature on why people involved in health care choose to work with children (Happell, 2000) and especially with children who are dying, and therefore there is a lack of research against which to examine the findings of this study. This limitation is exacerbated by the fact that in general, organisational behaviourists and social scientists have given little attention to work values that are intrinsic and nonsecular (Nord et al., 1990), although Kaplan and Tausky (1974, as cited in MOW-IRT, 1981) found that work as an intrinsically satisfying activity was one of the six typologies of the MOW that emerged in their study on the meanings and functions of work.

Many participants noted that their love for children was one of the factors that influenced them to become involved in this work, as seen by comments such as: *"I am working out of the love of the kids...I love these kids"* and *"I love them and I like to work with kids"*. Similarly, in the area of paediatric nursing (which is a good comparison for the work being conducted in this organisation because of the nature of the work and the people involved), other research has found that a liking for children and a desire to work with children are some of the most frequent explanations for engaging in nursing work (Steven & Dulhunty, 1992, & Cooper, 1995, both cited in Happell, 2000).

The fact that the children also require love was also a reason for working with them, as illustrated by this comment: *"you think children's needs are basic, but these children's needs are REALLY (original emphasis) basic. They need food and they need love"*. While being given love was seen as important for the children, having the opportunity to express love for children in need was seen as an important part of the work experience for the participants themselves: *"Yes, actually working with the*

*children and cuddling them and just loving them...making them feel that no matter what they feel like, being so ill and miserable, that somebody loves them”.*

It emerged that one of the reasons that participants felt they needed to show the children love was in order to make the most of the rest of their lives, a sentiment that was expressed by comments such as these two: *“this child is going to die, there’s nothing medical science has been able to do’, so my commitment would be to try and give it a sort of sneak preview of heaven, you know, give it the best possible treatment that it can have over the next three or four months”* and *“Just to give my help and my love to the kids for their last time because some of them they don’t make it, some of them they do die. Just so I do something in life for the kids”.*

*“Basically my heart is for the mothers and making sure that when a child leaves here they’re going with a neatly, healthy mother”* is a comment from this study that echoes what Reidy and Taggart (1991) and Rose and Clark-Alexander (1998) note, namely that with the exception of a small number of transfusion-infected children, the presence of a child with HIV/AIDS almost always means the presence of an adult with HIV/AIDS, and that this person is usually the mother. Reidy and Taggart (1991) therefore note that the problem is not just that there is a child with a terminal illness, but that the entire family is affected.

With the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in South Africa, not only are entire families affected but entire communities too. Helping these children, families (especially mothers) and communities was identified by the participants in this research as having a significant impact not only on their choice of work but on their experience of it. These two comments communicate something of what participants view their role in society to be: *“So that’s why [I] came to work here, at least [I am] doing some help for the kids in the community”* and *“that I can uplift somebody in the community that desperately needs it...has changed the way I consider my work”*. That participants work to contribute to the welfare of communities is a finding that is supported by Kirsh’s (2000) study, in which it was found that contributing to society by enhancing the life of the community at large was a factor that contributed to the meaningfulness of work. The MOW-IRT (1981) also note that rendering a service to others is a factor that can make a person’s work intrinsically satisfying.

The final intrinsic factor that was identified as having an impact on participants' reasons for wanting to help children with HIV/AIDS was because the children were viewed as being victims, a feeling which is clearly communicated by the following comments: *"they had no choice in actually how they become infected"* and *"I look at these kids and I say 'not one of these kids is sick here through their own fault' and they're doing all the suffering, which is, it kind of offends your sense of fairness"*.

The explanation of intrinsic and extrinsic orientations towards work, previously presented, introduced the notion of intrinsic rewards and this research uncovered a number of intrinsic rewards that are experienced by the participants in this research. The ensuing section will explore these in more detail.

### ***Intrinsic Orientation      Intrinsic Rewards***

People with an intrinsic orientation towards work have such an orientation because they believe that the rewards produced by the work itself are desirable (Roberson, 1990), or as Berglas (1996) states, intrinsic rewards are the positive outcomes that are derived from the activity itself, as opposed to those that one might ultimately gain from engaging in an activity. Having a positive impact on care providers' careers (Siegel et al., 1996, as cited in Fransman, McCullough, Lavies & Hussey, 2000), and intellectual stimulation and career satisfaction (Horstmann & McKusick (1986, as cited in Bennett et al., 1996 and in Bellani et al., 1996) are some of the intrinsic rewards associated with paediatric HIV-related work, and HIV/AIDS care in general, that have been identified in other studies. However, although Ufema (1994) notes that the rewards of nursing are often intrinsic, virtually no research was found that could be discussed in relation to these findings due to the lack of literature, as previously mentioned, on why people choose to work with terminally ill children and therefore the intrinsic rewards that may emerge from this type of work. Despite the lack of comparative evidence, the findings of this study are of obvious importance to the topic.

It is clear that for the participants in this study, recognition from other people was not a factor that influenced either their choice of work or their experience of it. An

integral part of being involved in this work is due to considering it a calling and for the service of God, therefore participants felt that recognition from other people was unnecessary, as illustrated by the comment: *“To me, being valued for what I do has never been an incentive... So whether people value me or ever say ‘thank you’, its not gonna make a difference to what I’m doing”*.

Not only was recognition considered as superfluous, but participants reported that receiving recognition was a negative experience, as exemplified by these quotes: *“friends and people are saying ‘you’re doing such a good job’ and that, and I actually hate it when people say that because I just feel... It’s not my glory, it’s the Lord’s glory”* and *“You get actually quite embarrassing feedback...I can’t stand it you know...I do it because I’ve got a sense of calling to be here...you don’t have a sense of doing something marvellous but you do get that feedback...I do find it embarrassing if people make a fuss...you know, that’s not right. It’s not just a job but it’s not intended as a “look at me” thing either”*. While this study has found that participants do not feel the need for recognition, it is interesting to consider what Clark (1989, as cited in Bennett et al., 1996) suggests, which is that HIV/AIDS carers who receive more recognition may be less prone to burnout.

The MOW-IRT (1981) found that one of the factors that can make work intrinsically satisfying is having the opportunity to learn more and to develop and use one’s abilities. This characteristic was also identified in this study, for as one participant noted: *“Being here for me, I’ve learnt a lot”*. This is similar to Bennett’s (1992, as cited in Bennett et al., 1996) finding, which was found that HIV/AIDS carers felt they could learn a lot from the patients. Furthermore, it is supported by Lane’s (1991, as cited in Wolfe, 1997) research, which found that the work environment is one where people can learn about their job and the wider world. In addition to learning, teaching was identified as an aspect that influences the working experience of participants in this study, as illustrated by the comment: *“My work is important because...there are people outside who don’t have knowledge. There are people outside who really need to be taught what’s going on”*.

Another factor that the MOW-IRT (1981) found that can render work intrinsically satisfying is deriving a sense of personal accomplishment from performing work

activities. Many of the participants in this study noted that their work provides them with a sense of accomplishment and fulfilment, a feeling that is encapsulated by this comment: *"I love what I do and I wouldn't do anything else...doing what I'm supposed to do and getting fulfilment from that is much greater [than getting recognition]"*. Part of experiencing work as fulfilling was due to participants' opinions that the work they are engaged in is significant. The quotation that best illustrates this is: *"I can actually say in my own life I have experienced a very distinct transition...from success to significance. I was extremely successful in what I was doing [previously] and I actually felt this actually has no significance really in the world at all...I was actually more fulfilled scraping scabs off a filthy refugee...Prior to that...there was actually no significance in what I was doing"*.

The satisfaction participants gained from being able to observe the changes in the children, was identified as an intrinsic reward, as the following comment clearly communicates: *"working with the children is very rewarding and you know, you sometimes wonder why you do what you do, but if you see the change in one child's life, one child that's either alive and well today or one child that's died happily in somebody's arms, then you know its worth it"*. Enhancing this experience was the knowledge that they had contributed to this by *"making a difference"*.

Being able to witness the development in the children ties in with what Salancik and Brand (1992) state as being one of the factors that allows a person's work to be motivating or satisfying, namely, being able to see the significance of your work for others. Witnessing the significance of one's work was also identified as one of the factors that impacted the experience of those participants more involved in the administrative work than directly involved with the children, as illustrated by the comment, *"It's just much more meaningful working in a place here...I mean...I am supposed to be doing admin work, but it makes me feel that I am actually contributing...in a child's life"*.

*"Working with the children itself is very rewarding because children...just accept love and they give love, unconditionally"*. This comment highlights that receiving love from the children is one of the rewards associated with the work that participants are involved in. Experiencing being able to do something for others as a privilege was

the last intrinsic reward that was identified in this study, as demonstrated by this comment: *“it’s such a privilege to actually be able to do something for other people”*. Similarly, Freeman (2004, p. 12) in her article on caring for dying people, notes that one of the things that attracts both her (a nurse) and others to this type of work “is the privilege of dealing on a daily basis with life in the raw”.

The impact of contextual factors on work experiences and the meaning that work holds for the participants has been made clear. This impact, and the diversity of potential contextual influences, as demonstrated by the variety of contextually-related findings in both this chapter and the previous one, may explain why many participants found it difficult to define what activities could be construed as work. Using these contextual factors as a basis, this discussion will move on to examine some of the additional aspects that participants attach meaning to, and therefore how participants define work.

### ***Defining work***

Ciulla (2000) notes that the word ‘work’ can be used in so many ways and to denote many things. For this reason, and because as Applebaum (1992) notes, there is no definition of work that is wholly satisfying, there are a variety of ways in which work and working can be defined. Remaining with the theme that was examined in the previous section, namely, the influence of religious beliefs, definitions of work that are related to this theme will be examined first.

#### ***Work, A Job, Or A Calling/Ministry?***

The difficulty that participants had in defining work is exemplified by the following comment: *“To me it is work but at the same time it’s actually a calling for me. I know that God just placed me in this job. So I don’t know that that classifies as work as well”*. When discussing different types of work, another participant said: *“maybe we are playing with semantics, but to some extent I see what I do as a ministry. I am not doing it as a career”*.



The concept of a calling or of work being a ministry seemed to make it difficult for participants to explain how they viewed their work. Ciulla (2000) comments that the word ‘work’ is not only an activity, but a set of ideas and values related to that activity and therefore that viewing work as a calling refers to an attitude towards work, not a type of work. This explanation seems to elucidate what the participants were trying to say, that is, that work for them is not constituted so much by the activities that they are engaged in, but by the motives and values behind the actions. The participants’ motivation is that they believe that God has put them in these positions and that they are in God’s service. This is the context in which the participants are using the word ‘calling’, which is in accordance with the comment that Ciulla (2000) makes, namely that the word ‘calling’ is now generally used to refer to religious occupations.

Even when talking about, explaining and defining their work as a calling, some of the participants introduced the role of money and financial income, as seen in these comments: *“It’s a calling ...but work is also important to me...for the money”* and *“it’s work for me because I earn a salary, but I think also it’s my mission”*. The role of money in defining work is an important factor to consider when trying to understand the MOW, because as noted in the review of the literature, despite significant evidence to the contrary, it is a widely held understanding among general populations that work equals a paid job or employment, and most studies on the MOW are based on this assumption. Money was identified as a factor that influences working experiences in a number of different ways and these different areas of influence are examined next.

### ***The Role of Money in Defining Work***

This section considers the impact that money has on people’s work experiences, after which the resultant role that money plays in defining work will be discussed.

A number of participants made comments that indicated that one reason for working in general is for money, as indicated by this remark: *“Unfortunately I need the money, so I couldn’t [work] voluntarily”*. This finding is in line with what England and Harpaz (1990) found, which was that economic rationale was the most frequently

cited reason to work. England and Whitely (1990) also state that work provides the fringe benefits and income that constitutes the major part of economic well-being for the majority of individuals in industrial societies. The MOW-IRT (1987) also found that for most people, work provides for their economic wellbeing.

One participant noted that even if one does not actually physically receive money for the work that you do, work is related to financial gain of some type. The participant said: *"I believe that you will get and receive a financial reward even if you don't get physically paid for what you do - the financial reward will come a different way...you might get food, you might get clothing"*. This finding expresses that while one may not receive money for the work that you do, one can expect extrinsic or quasi-financial reward of some type, thus echoing Puth's (1994) sentiment, which is that in most circumstances nowadays, people expect to be paid or compensated for the work they do.

A relationship between paid work and psychological well-being also emerged in this study. Although individual and social psychology literature generally focuses on the non-monetary aspects of the work experience, it does consider the psychological significance of paid work and the psychological impact of financial stress, and the fact that many functions that are important for individual well-being are fulfilled by well-designed, paid work (Flora, 1999). As this organisation is reliant on funding, job tenure is insecure, resulting in stress and pressure because of financial concerns. These were highlighted by a participant in this study, who noted: *"there's never like six months funding in the bank for you to know that you're gonna have a job in six months time. So, I think it is very stressful and everybody is aware of that, and...there was much more pressure when people knew 'well, we only have, you know, so much in the bank and so much for salaries at the end of the month' ...it just places unnecessary pressure."*

A factor that was identified in this study as having a mediating effect on stress and pressure due to financial insecurity, was religious faith. As one participant noted: *"my last taxable salary...was 1993...I was in the maximum marginal tax bracket...[but] God allowed us to progress from having faith in our bank account...He's never let us down."*

There were also a number of participants for whom money was a factor in what can be considered / defined as ‘work’ and what cannot. With regards to a discussion on the types of activities that the volunteers are involved in and whether what they do can be regarded as working, one participant stated that: *“they play with the kids and they exercise the kids, so they help us – they are working”*. When asked to clarify, the participant agreed that volunteers can be considered as working because they do some of the same activities and tasks for which other people at this organisation are paid. Therefore, although this participant did not directly link work and money, what can be inferred from the discussion with this participant, is that a person’s actions can be considered as working if they are the same as activities for which other people are paid.

For other participants, money played a more distinct role in what can be classified as work. The following comment clearly illustrates one participant’s understanding that not getting money for the activities that you do means that those activities cannot be considered as work. The participant observed that many of the activities in which they are involved are *“totally non-income-generating! Which I suppose one might say is a hobby then and not work”*. When discussing volunteering, one participant said: *“Well, I don’t think, like volunteers...it isn’t work, but the rest of us - the people who get paid - its working, I think”*, and another commented that *“...there is a big difference from a volunteer to someone doing work and being paid.”* One comment which puts this issue simply and succinctly was: *“it’s work for me because I earn a salary”*. These comments support Brief and Nord’s (1990b) observation that in modern societies, work is the activity for which one receives financial remuneration and it is in line with a number of studies on the MOW which have been based on the understanding that work is equal to paid employment.

It is clear from the discussion so far, that some participants were adamant that money did play a role in defining work. However, there were some who were equally adamant that money did not determine whether activities could be considered as work. One participant commented *“Even though I don’t get paid for it, I still think of it as work”*, and another stated that *“You definitely don’t have to earn an income while working”*. These findings are in line with what Fox (1994) states, which is that

work is not only about getting paid, and with what Cuilla (2000) notes, which is that while a 'job' is an activity for which one gets paid, 'work' is something that is done with or without pay (Cuilla, 2000). Concerning the relationship between work and the job, one participant commented that the work they are involved in is not really their passion and when probed, responded: "*Well, I see it more as...a job sort of thing. It has to be done*". Thus for this person, there is a clear difference between work and the job, echoing what Cuilla (2000) discusses, that is, that the word 'job' has become associated with work of an impersonal nature - it is merely an activity for which one gets paid.

The findings of this research did not support the conclusions that can be drawn from Havighurst's (1962) study, namely, that the lower a person is on the occupational ladder, the more likely they are to emphasise the financial meanings of working. While many participants did mention the role of money in their work and work experiences, the varying opinions on the role of money in work were spread over all occupational positions. It is likely that this finding is related to the fact that many participants felt their work to be a calling and that subsequently, the intrinsic rewards of the work were emphasised over financial gain.

Although individuals in lower organisational positions did sometimes emphasise the role of money in their life and work experiences, views on the important role of money in work were not confined to these levels. For example, when asked whether they would still do the work they do if they didn't need to work for money, one participant at a middle level stated: "*No, I wouldn't do nursing...I would do catering or something creative!*" This participant's basically communicated that if it was not for the money, they would do a different type of work, thus communicating the importance of money to this participant's experience of work.

While this last statement is in contrast to the large majority of the sample who viewed their work as some type of calling or mission despite the role that money plays, it is in accordance with what Morse and Weiss (1962 & 1968) found, which was that while the majority of their participants said they would still continue to work if they already had the means to support themselves, many thought that they would switch jobs instead of continuing working in the same job. This last statement also introduces the

role of enjoyment in work, because it can be deduced that this participant works in the field of nursing because of the money, and that they do not actually enjoy the work. The role of enjoyment in defining work will be examined next, in conjunction with an examination of the role of time.

### ***Enjoyment and Time***

If activities are enjoyable, does that render them not work and automatically make them leisure activities? This is the type of question that arises from comments such as: *“So I don’t know that that classifies as work as well. I know that I’m enjoying it at the same time”*, which was made by one participant. This comment is very interesting because while this person is saying that they enjoy what they are doing, they are concerned that their enjoyment of what they are doing may mean that it cannot be considered as work, highlighting the notion that work is sometimes viewed as something that is not enjoyable, or as something that should not be enjoyed. This view reflects that of the ancient Greeks and Romans, who thought work was a curse from the gods - something tedious and unenjoyable (Ciulla, 2000; Nord, Brief, Atieh & Doherty, 1990; Tilgher, 1931, 1962). Freud (1961, as cited in Sonnenberg, 1997) also considered work to be unacceptable to the pleasure principle and therefore an activity to be tolerated. While these were common views during some periods of history, more recent research by England and Harpaz (1990) found that only 4.2% of their sample defined work as unpleasant, and therefore that viewing or defining work as unpleasant activity is a minority characteristic.

One participant commented: *“I think...definitely a volunteer comes and works... they commit their time and they actually work for that time”* and this comment alludes to the fact that volunteering can be considered as working because it is done for a certain amount of committed time. The notion that work is something that is bounded by time is supported by England and Harpaz (1990) and England and Whitely (1990), who found that for some people, working can be categorised as such because the activities under consideration take place during specified time periods.

### *Summation*

This chapter began by examining the impact of religious beliefs on work experiences, and this included exploring the notion of work as a calling and other intrinsic orientations towards work and intrinsic rewards associated with this type of work. Attention was drawn to the broad range of intrinsic rewards that participants in this study experience, thus contradicting views that consider economic rewards as the sole reason for engaging in work. Morse and Weiss (1962 & 1968) note that with the increasing complexity and industrialisation of society, work as a means to earning a living became more prominent, but they caution against over-generalising this trend because financial income may not be the only function that work serves. The findings of this study reinforce Mores and Weiss's caution, because it is clear that money is not the only factor in determining what can be considered as work and therefore it is unlikely to be the only factor that renders a person's work as meaningful.

The first section of the chapter was linked to the second, which was concerned with defining work, through a discussion on defining work as a calling. It is interesting that despite the prominence of viewing work as a calling amongst this sample, money still played a role in the experience of work. The chapter then moved on to further explore and discuss the role of money in defining work and it concluded with a short discussion on the defining characteristics of enjoyment and time.

The results, discussed in this chapter and the previous one, identified the large number of diverse findings elicited by the analysis process. The findings are as diverse as people are unique. However, attempts have been made to relate the findings to the literature, as well as to clearly indicate the links between the overarching themes and between the portions within each theme. The results contained in these last two chapters have given rise to a number of implications regarding research into the MOW and these are reviewed in the next chapter.

## Chapter Eight

### Some Implications of the Findings

The implications of the research findings will be considered in relation to the importance of context for the MOW, and the effects for stakeholders.

#### *The Importance of Context and Intrinsic Rewards*

Despite the fact that other research has predominantly concluded that religion has little or no impact on the way people view work, this research has clearly shown that this may not be valid in all contexts. While the impact of religion on the work experiences of the participants and on what their work means to them may in part be due to the combination of the nature of the work and the fact that this organisation upholds a particular religious orientation, the impact of religious beliefs on work experiences, and therefore meaning, for the participants in this research was clearly shown. The discussions regarding the impact of religious beliefs on work experiences and thus the MOW would have been significantly enhanced by more comparative data. Research on the role of religious beliefs in the MOW would be a beneficial contribution to the existing MOW literature. Investigating the religious aspects of work values is also one of the areas that Nord et al. (1990) suggest for consideration in future organisational psychology research or thought.

This research clearly illustrated that while money plays an important role in participants' work experiences and therefore the way they define work, it was not always the most important aspect of the work experience. The broad range of intrinsic rewards that emerged in this study contradict views that consider economic rewards as the sole reason for engaging in work. More research, that is not based on the premise

that work can be equated to those activities or actions for which one receives financial income, is necessary.

Ros, Schwartz and Surkiss (1999) state that differences in the MOW reflect the differences in the experiences people have had in the world of work. However, work-related experiences are not the only experiences impacting the meaning that work holds for people. Neff (1985) notes that meaning has social and cultural determinants and therefore the meanings attached to work cannot only be derived from the nature of the activity. Furthermore, Brief and Nord (1990b) note that in order to study the meaning that work has for people, a broad spectrum of individual, social, political and economic factors should be considered. This research has attempted to examine all of these facets of context in order to gain a wide and non-prescriptive understanding of the factors having an influence on the work experiences, and thus the meaning that work holds, for the participants who took part in this study. It is clear that context has a broad impact on people's experiences of work and the size of the portion of the results in this research that are related to context is testament to the importance of considering contextual influences on the MOW.

Fineman (1991) states that, if the argument that there is more to meaning than presented images is accepted, then researchers must explore what people no longer notice as well as what they cannot easily express, that is, that which is latent. He notes that meanings may be latent for a variety of reasons, for example for psychological defence, because to admit that one's work lacks meaning may make it difficult to continue that work, especially if there is no other alternative. The argument that people aren't aware of what their work means to them until they are outside of that situation, as previously discussed, is also worth considering in more detail in future studies on the meaning of work and working, and Fineman (1991) brings attention to this scenario by pointing to the parable where the fish only realises the meaning of water when it finds itself out of the water.

The MOW-IRT (1987) concluded that over the previous couple of decades, stronger preferences for work over leisure emerged. However, the findings of this study tend to disagree with this, for work often emerged as being more important to the participants than other aspects or areas of their lives. It is also clear from this study that the factors



that are important to the participants and the factors that induce them to work in such an environment as is characteristic of the organisation on which this research is focused, are much more diverse than can be found in the available literature on the MOW.

Wuthnow (1996, as cited in Wolfe, 1997) found in his research that when people felt good about their work, they felt good about themselves. One participant in this study also recognised how one's work experiences permeate into other life areas, as a negative work experience had influenced other life experiences. This situation points to two important aspects requiring consideration in a study on the MOW, namely that the MOW has both positive and negative emotional dimensions, and that understanding the MOW is important because of the prominent role that work holds in people's lives and its tendency to permeate other areas of life.

### *Implications for Stakeholders*

A number of findings from this study have implications for various stakeholders. First, for organisations. An improved understanding of the MOW will be a response to the recent recognition that organisations need to help create purpose and meaning for their employees (Leigh, 1997). Furthermore, recognition of the fact that people may be engaging in work for reasons other than financial income, and an improved understanding of the rewards that employees do, and expect to, gain from their work will aid employers in the design of work processes, plus reward and pay structures. Simply, as Wheatley (1999, p.5) comments, "meaning motivates people", and how to motivate their employees is a key concern for organisational leaders. Similarly, Brown et al. (2001) suggest that identifying meaning in the workplace will lead to increased job satisfaction and that this would be beneficial to employers.

Second, a better understanding of the MOW, the role of money in the MOW and the role of other factors in what makes work meaningful may aid government and public bodies in the resolution of the unemployment situation in South Africa. For example, recognition of the factors (other than money) that make engaging in work both meaningful may encourage people to engage in work that provides a relatively low income. Low income jobs, coupled with a reduction of the negative social and

psychological effects of unemployment is likely to be more beneficial in the long term than high unemployment. Income and meaning do not both need to be sacrificed – less financially beneficial jobs can still be made meaningful through an improved understanding of the MOW.

Third, individuals will themselves benefit from an improved understanding of what their work means to them, and will be better equipped to make choices regarding what type of work they would like to do, what environment they would like to do it in, and what work characteristics that they should seek to make their work meaningful for themselves.

There is a lack of research on the MOW for specific occupations or for people who do specific types of work, which resulted in there being a shortage of literature against which to examine the findings of this study that were specifically related to why people choose to work with sick and dying children, and what this experience is like. An improved understanding of these aspects will not only aid individuals in choosing what types of work they would like to engage in, but it will aid organisations in the selection and management of the people most suitable for the work.

Fourth, for Organisational Psychologists. The field of Organisational Psychology has interests in all these areas, both to improve the understanding of the MOW, and to develop the benefits for the stakeholders with whom organisational psychologists work. It appears that the conditions in South Africa, as illustrated by this study in an organisation caring for children with HIV/AIDS, but also probably extending also to poverty, unemployment, political history, societal views and other contextual factors not typical of countries where most of the MOW research has taken place, provide fertile opportunity for local research contributing to a better understanding of the MOW. Organisational Psychologists need to extend the notion of the organisation beyond traditional corporate settings, and to recognise the value of research into a more diverse range of work settings.

## Chapter Nine

### Conclusion

The difficulty of studying the MOW is largely due to two things: the uniqueness of meaning; and the complexities involved in defining work and working. The unique nature of the MOW and working for individuals was examined in the review of the literature, however, it is still necessary to make some additional comments regarding the complexities involved with conducting a study on the MOW.

Although different groups agree among themselves on the definition of work, there is no universal understanding of the concept. This is largely because, as England and Harpaz (1990) note, there are few empirical examples to follow and previous discussions on the topic of the MOW and working are both voluminous and variable in content, approach and coverage; and because due to the scope of the study conducted by the MOW-IRT, there is a lack of literature and research on the MOW that is not based on that study. Brief (1991) notes that because of the big, international MOW study, many papers and studies are flavoured by the International Team's orientation towards how work should be studied, even though studies may differ in focus and approach.

Brief (1991) cautions that, both the International Team and others concerned with the MOW and working, should recognise that the Team's international study only represents one approach to understanding. The researcher recognised this aspect and therefore did not rely on definitions of work from other studies, including those used in the MOW-International Research. At the conclusion of this research, this choice still seems to have been most appropriate, although it was not without repercussions - it made conducting the research significantly harder. A lack of definitional boundaries meant that participants had to approach the questions from their own understanding of

work. However, as many lacked clarity, not only of their own understanding of work in general but of what makes their own work meaningful, answering some of the questions became a struggle.

Furthermore, most of the existing research that has been conducted on the MOW has been quantitative. While participants in this research had to, to a certain degree, conform their answers to the questions asked, as opposed to being able to freely talk about their work experiences and the meaning that their work holds to them, the quantitative research that has previously been conducted on the MOW has forced people to conform their answers to the specific options, rating scales, or the provided definitions of work. Thus only predetermined approaches to and understandings of work and meaning have been explored, and consequently, much of the previous research on the MOW has been largely prescriptive.

In addition, much of previous research and literature on the MOW has been based on the large study conducted by the MOW IRT, which has resulted in there being a lack of variety in the research findings. This does not mean that the results of different research projects have been similar, but for example, if the studies are based on the MOW-IRT's research, then the results will be constrained by the same norms that were researched in that study.

This research set out to explore whether key aspects of a new organisational challenge (the impact of HIV/AIDS on the MOW in a caring organisation) can be understood on the basis of existing information and research of a specific organisation. This research has clearly shown that key aspects of a new organisational challenge, regarding understanding the MOW in the context of HIV/AIDS and caring organisations, can be understood by researching an organisation within that context. However, while the existing literature and research was sufficient as a basis for conducting the study, this research clearly shows that there are significant gaps in the MOW research, against which to examine these research findings.

The research achieved its main objectives, in that the key characteristics affecting the MOW for people in the specific organisation have been identified, the value of

understanding the MOW for various stakeholders has been illustrated, and a basis for future research has been laid.

There is a plethora of literature on the projected impact of HIV/AIDS on the economic wellbeing of organisations. There is also widespread recognition of the need for Human Resource Management to respond to the disease, and many organisations are doing so with regards to educating employees about the disease, ensuring that their employee relations are in line with the legislation and altering employee benefit programmes, for example. However, there appears to be no research on the impact of HIV/AIDS on the human processes that underlie many accepted work practices, such as benefit programmes. This research has clearly illustrated the impact of context on the MOW, and HIV/AIDS is creating a new context in which people live and work, whether their work is directly related to HIV/AIDS, as in the organisation in this research, or not. Understanding the impact of HIV/AIDS on the MOW is therefore a new facet of organisational psychology that requires further investigation.

Organisational psychology literature is filled with concerns relating to the changing context of work and ‘the new world of work’, however, there appear to be no recent, significant explorations on how these changing contexts are affecting the MOW. This research has been a scholarly application of existing research and literature on the MOW, to a new context, through research into an organisation beyond the bounds of traditional corporate environments. It has laid a platform for further research because investigations into the MOW in South African organisations, across industries, occupations, gender, age, race, economic and societal standing, would be of immense interest and value to the field of organisational psychology. Continued research into the MOW is necessary because as previously noted, the MOW is developmental.

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## Appendix A

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

#### Theme: Demographic information

Name.....Gender.....

- 1.1. What is your position at this organisation? (what type of work to you do?)
- 1.2. Do you work the day or the night shift?
- 1.3. How long have you been working here?
- 1.4. How many shifts do you work each week?
- 1.5. How old are you?
- 1.6. Do you have any children of your own?

#### Theme: Understanding of work

- 2.1. Please tell me about what you do here on an average day.
- 2.2. Not everyone means the same thing when they talk about work and working, for example, the nurses, doctors and volunteers at this organisation may mean different things when they say they “work” here. Do you think all of these different activities can be called “work”? If so, how come? If not, why not?

Possible prompts: What are the differences between these types of work?  
Are there any particular characteristics that determine whether an activity should be classified as working or not, for example, if you do it to contribute to society or if other people profit from it?

- 2.3. For some people, work is something that is done at certain times. Does working the day/night shift make you feel differently about the work you do, and does it affect your experience of working?
- 2.4. For some people / you mentioned - that work is paid employment, so if you had enough money not to have to work for an income, would you stop working?  
What would you say are the reasons for this?

#### Theme: Importance of work and other life areas

- 3.1. If you think about your work and other areas of your life or other activities that you are involved in, how important is work to you?

3.2. Are there any particular reasons, aspects, or characteristics of your work that are important to you?

Possible prompts: for example, having work that is interesting or satisfying; the relationships you have with the people you work with; being able to help people.

3.3. What other areas or activities in your life are important to you and why?

Possible prompts: for example, your family, your community, being with your friends.

#### **Theme: working with children**

*[May or may not have mentioned working with children as part of their answers to questions 3.1-3.3]*

4. Your work here is focused on children. Please tell me about your experiences of working with children.

Possible prompts: How does it make you feel?  
What motivates you to work with children?  
Do you have children of your own and if so, does working with children have an effect on how you parent your own children?

#### **Theme: Working with the terminally ill**

5. The work you do here with the children also obviously centres around the fact that the children have HIV or AIDS and many of them are very sick. Please tell me about your experiences of working with terminally ill patients and how it makes you feel.

Possible prompts: Why have you chosen to work with terminally ill children?  
What motivates you to work with terminally ill children?

#### **Theme: Religion**

This organisation is a Christian organization that upholds Christian principles, values and ethics.

6.1. Are you a practising Christian?

6.2. Does the fact that it is a Christian organisation have an influence on your choice to work here?

6.3. If not a Christian: what impact does the fact that it is a Christian organisation have on your choice to work here and the work you do each day?

#### **Theme: Non-work**

7.1. Has there ever been a time when you haven't been working?

*If so:*



7.2. Did you not work by choice or were you unemployed due to other circumstances?

*If by choice:* What were your reasons and how did not working make you feel?

*If not by choice:* How did this make you feel and what did you miss, if anything, about working?

7.3.1. Do you think that everyone has a right to work if they want to? Any reasons for this?

7.3.2. Do you think that people have a duty to work as a way of contributing to society?

7.4. What do you normally do with your time when you are not working?

**Theme: Gender issues**

8.1. Do you think there is a difference between work that males should do and work that females should do? Why do think this is so?

8.2. Has being a male / female ever had an influence on your experiences of work? How so?

8.3. Do you think society, your friends and family or people at this organisation value your work differently because you are a woman/man? Why do you think this is so?

**Theme: Conclusion**

9.1. Do you think your work is valued by this organization? What makes you say that?

9.2. Would you recommend your occupation, work or job to anyone else and could you please explain your reasons for me.

**Thank you.**